



L. KASNECI

# STEELLED IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE

LEFTER KASNECI

# STEELED IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE

A BRIEF SURVEY  
OF THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL-LIBERATION  
WAR OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE

(1941 — 1944)

THE «NAIM FRASHËRI» PUBLISHING HOUSE  
TIRANA, 1966



## INTRODUCTION

To get a clear and convincing idea of how the armed forces in the war for national liberation were created and how they fought and won against more powerful enemies it is essential to cast a glance at the past filled with sufferings and sacrifices of the Albanian people who have hacked their way through history with sword in hand.

For centuries at a row the Albanian people have waged bitter and heroic wars for freedom and for the independence of their country. Our forefathers have offered active resistance against the Greek colonisers and the Roman legions as well as against Byzantine and other people's invasions during the period covering the XII and XIV centuries. One of the most brilliant pages of the history of the Albanian people has been written for its time by the heroic 25-year war of the Albanian people against the Turkish invaders led by the legendary hero George Kastrioti alias Scanderbeg during the XVth century. Our people fought with rare heroism and came off victorious against an enemy superior in numbers for they fought for a just cause.

After Scanderbeg's death the Turks over-ran Albania but even under Turkish occupation our people were never subdued, they never ceased their efforts and their struggle for freedom and independence. Their determination to attain freedom never slackened.

Although the centuries of Turkish domination brought about a lot of suffering and indescribable

misery to our people, the latter never kowtowed but fought, devotion to freedom remained unquelled in the heart of every Albanian.

This is clearly demonstrated by the struggle of our people during the period from the XVIIth to the XIXth centuries a period filled with repeated uprisings against the Turks to preserve their mother-tongue and customs and to ward off denationalization and oriental oppression. During the second half of the XIXth century our men of the Period of National-revival elaborated the Albanian language, aroused national consciousness and primed the people for a broad armed uprising.

The struggle and efforts of our people, limited in numbers but brave and freedom-loving, were crowned with success on November 28, 1912 when Hero of the People Ismail Qemal and other Albanian patriots, proclaimed Albania an independent country. This was a major historical event for our people and an equally important step ahead towards creating the independent state of the Albanian people who after nearly five centuries of bondage under ruthless Ottoman rule won their independence.

But even after winning independence the Albanian people continued to be ruled by the local feudal lords who had replaced the Turkish invaders. The feudal bourgeois government instead of transforming feudal relations upheld the interests of the ruling classes of the feudal bourgeoisie.

Even after winning their independence our people rose up again in arms against home and alien oppressors, but all these uprisings failed because objective conditions were not ripe and a consistent leadership to lead them in war was lacking. Taking advantage of these circumstances imperialist armies fell on them, suppressing and drowning them in blood.

The Great October Socialist Revolution organized and carried out under the leadership of Lenin's and Stalin's Bolshevik Party and which marked the most important and most radical turning point in the history of mankind, exerted a major and decisive role on the national revolutionary movement of our people too. The great ideas of the socialist revolution influenced the proceedings of the Lushnje Congress which was opened on January 1, 1920; they incited the Battle of Vlora on June 5, 1920 which ended with the ouster of the Italian imperialist invaders from Albanian territory; they gave a major impetus to the struggle against ruthless oppression and to the movement to establish democracy in the country. The 1924 bourgeois democratic revolution led by the great patriot Fan S. Noli, whose program envisaged the extermination of feudalism, the emancipation of the people and the final establishment of democracy in Albania, was another stage of the further development of the national democratic movement in Albania.

But the objectives of this revolution failed to substantiate because the Government which was set up as the result of the bourgeois-democratic revolution was overthrown by the intervention of the Italian, Servian and Greek imperialists headed by the English imperialists and because a sound management and organization of revolutionary forces was lacking, a fact which alienated from the revolution many people from the rank and file who had formerly upheld it. Taking advantage of these blunders the reactionaries embarked on anti-popular counter-revolutionary activities in all fields. In December 1924 Ahmed Zog, assisted by foreign imperialists, suppressed the democratic movement and re-established his monarchic, anti-democratic, feudal and bourgeois regime in Albania.



### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STANDING OF THE COUNTRY DURING THE PERIOD OF ZOG'S RULE

The feudal bourgeois rule of the Zogite Government did not only aggravate the economic conditions of the country but it also placed it under the control of the capital of foreign imperialists. Feudal economic relations were further maintained under this regime. Power was in the hands of feudal chiefs born and brought up in an Ottoman environment who impeded the progress of society to a great extent. The bourgeoisie were unable to make headway for they were greatly hampered by feudal relations, although some progress was made especially by the merchant bourgeoisie. They began buying lands from the feudal lords and setting up an agrarian bourgeoisie. Feudal lords and the bourgeoisie made a common cause in protecting feudal exploitation against the rural masses. Want and misery were at their height. Farmers were forced out of their lands which were plundered by the ruling feudal chiefs.

Handicrafts for which the country was famous and which played an important role, far from being promoted were put at a disadvantageous position by the competition of industrial goods imported from abroad, especially from Italy.

Workers, whose numbers were continually increasing, were also ruthlessly exploited. Many workers became victims of unemployment. In the principal cities of the country alone, in Shkodra, Tirana and Durrës 50% of the workers were jobless during the years from 1930 to 1936. There was no law in power to protect

workers from ruthless exploitation by local and, particularly, foreign imperialist capitalists, to provide security measures at work, to provide for accident, illness, disability and so on. Workers who were becoming more and more conscious of their rights from day to day, began to organize themselves and set up their own associations in order to protect themselves from oppression and ruthless exploitation. Through these organizations the working class began to wage a better organized fight for higher wages, for less hours of work, against dismissing workers from their jobs and so on. The working class became more daring in their fight against internal rulers and against the intrusion of foreign capital particularly against the invasion of Albania by the Italian fascist troops.

Zog's Government, alarmed by the revolutionary impetus of the masses and resorting to the policy of «the open door», created conditions for all imperialist countries, especially England, Italy and America to swoop down upon Albania and take hold of the key-positions of our national economy. The Italian imperialists, however, plunged their claws deeper into our national economy through the signing of such treaties as that of friendship and security between Albania and Italy (November 27, 1926) and that of alliance between Albania and Italy (November 22, 1927). These agreements, which sound promising by their title, allowed a free hand to the Italian fascists not only to penetrate into but also to direct the economic development of our country. As a consequence fascist agents took over gradually the political life of the country too; the state and armed forces of our country acted to comply with the will and interests of the imperialists. All the preliminary capitulating acts of the pro-fascist cliques led to the occupation of our country by fascist Italy (April 7, 1939).

### RESISTANCE OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE AGAINST THE OPPRESSIVE MEASURES OF THE ITALIAN FASCIST INVADERS

The Italian fascists accompanied their military occupation of Albania with a range of political, economic and administrative measures. These were further steps to conceal their rapacious objectives before external and internal public opinion. Not later than two days after their occupation of the country they set up a «Provisional Administrative Committee» and summoned a so-called «Constituent Assembly» made up of their old agents, of representatives from the ruling classes, from landowners, chieftains and the bourgeoisie.

«The Assembly» was an organ which acted upon instructions from the invaders, for the King of Italy was the Supreme Head of the Albanian State enjoying the right of declaring war, of concluding peace and of signing international agreements. The King of Italy exercised these attributes through his «Lieutenant». A formal «Albanian Government» was maintained for the purpose of calming down the revolting broad masses of people who were full of indignation and resentment against the fascist colonizers and their lackeys.

In order to legalize and speed up the colonization of Albania, the Italians proclaimed at once the convention «on the parity of civil and political rights», according to which Italian subjects enjoyed all the civil and political rights which the Albanian citizens enjoyed, a thing which, in fact, sped up the process of de-nationa-

lization and of complete assimilation of the Albanian people. On the basis of this convention Albania was infested with tens of thousands of colonizers like laborers, farmers, specialists, teachers, councillors, businessmen, merchants, state employees and so on. Following the occupation of the country, the Italian fascists took over all the Albanian economic resources and trade. They sanctioned the further economic enslavement of Albania, especially through the convention, according to which, the lands of the two countries were considered «as forming a single entity» (April 20, 1939). On this basis Albania adopted the general tariffs of the Kingdom of Italy, as the Italian custom-house law or every other stipulation which was in force in Italy.

The major Italian financial groups as «Banco d'Italia», «Banco di Napoli», «Montecatini», «The Italian State Railways» and others, opened up their branches in Albania for the purpose of exploiting the resources of the country and cheap labor here. Only one year after occupation, in 1940, there were nearly 140 different Italian capitalist enterprises in function in Albania.

The Italian monopolists attached special consideration to the mining of strategic raw material, particularly chromium and petroleum, which they exploited a great deal for military purposes. In 1940 the Italian fascists took from Albania such amounts of chromium as to meet all their needs as well as large quantities of petroleum, bitumen and so on.

Italian monopolist capital turned Albania into an ultimate source of raw materials and into a safe market for its goods.

This dealt a further blow to the development of home industry which was already weak. But even that little industry which existed had to close some of its branches for good. Albanian craftsmen were reduced to



dire want as a consequence of the competition of Italian industrial goods. The working conditions of the Albanian laborers were deplorable. They were treated economically much worse than the Italian workers.

The peasantry was in an equally lamentable state; Italian fascists pursued the policy of ruthlessly exploiting the Albanian countryside for the purpose of securing as large a quantity of foodstuffs for the metropolis and for their troops of occupation in Albania.

The only ones to profit from the new situation created in Albania were the upper merchant bourgeoisie which became richer through joint speculation with the Italian capitalists.

In order to maintain their regime of occupation and to carry out their aggressive intentions against other Balkan countries, bordering with Albania, the Italian fascists adopted a number of measures of a military character. They landed in Albania their IXth Army corps and a number of special detachments of aviation, of their fleet, of the fascist militia, of the carabinieri, of border guards and so on, reaching to nearly 100,000 persons under the command of General Visconti Prasca. The Italian fascists incorporated six battalions of the former Albanian army. The Italian fascists set up also a number of minor detachments of fascist militia and carabinieri from the dregs of the population, victims to the guiles of the fascists who took advantage of their credulity.

With a view to carrying out their expansionist intentions on other Balkan peoples the Italian fascists took concrete steps to turn our country into a military base in the true meaning of the term. Thus, they built new roads for strategic purposes, barracks, airports throughout our country. In order to build these military objectives the fascists robbed the peasants of thousands of hectares of arable land.

In addition to these measures the Italian invaders set up a wide network of organs to oppress the people and terrorize the Albanian patriots. Right after their occupation of the country they deported to jails and camps of concentration on Italian islands about 1000 Albanian patriots. On June 2, 1939, the Italian «Lieutenant» Jacomoni issued a decree to disarm the Albanian population within the time limit of 30 days. (The Albanian people have had the tradition, of keeping some kind of firearms in their homestead). This decree included severe punishments including death sentences against the ones who disobeyed its stipulations. A «fascist» newspaper wrote at the time: «... Who does not hand over his rifle after a certain time limit will be disarmed by force and will be put with shoulders on the wall facing a company of sharpshooters waiting the order «fire».

On July 13 a committee was formed under the direction of the fascist general of the carabinieri, Agostinucci, «to persecute persons of dubious political standing» (referring to persons engaged in organizing the national-liberation movement).

In addition, strict orders were issued prohibiting circulation at night, listening to foreign broadcasts and so on. The Italian invaders acted like masters of the country while the Albanian people were denied the most elementary political rights. They fell a prey to most ruthless exploitation and oppression.

In spite of that, the attempts of the fascist invaders to force the Albanian people to submit to fascist occupation, to obey the laws and orders of the fascist invaders fell short of achieving success. The Albanian people kept up the fight they had started against the fascist aggressors on April 7, 1939. They never recognized the regime of foreign occupation.

### RESISTANCE OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF FASCIST INVASION

During the very earliest months of their rule in Albania the Italian fascists came up against the resistance of the Albanian workers, peasants, patriotic intellectuals and particularly of the youth, who began to manifest their hatred towards the invaders openly and in a spontaneous way.

The only political organizations in existence in Albania at the time when the Italian fascists occupied the country were the communist groups. Under their direction powerful anti-fascist demonstrations and protests were organized in various cities of the country, plans of the invaders to fascistize and de-nationalize the Albanian people were frustrated, a number of strikes were organized in the industrial enterprises of construction which were in the service of the enemy. Thus, for instance, the obligatory enrollment in the fascist party was wrecked right at the start. Fascist chiefs were hissed and ridiculed. Posters they hung on walls were torn to pieces, fascist manifestations were sabotaged by the people.

As early as June 1939 the workers at the Vlora dockyards went on strike for higher wages. The strikers hindered the unloading of armaments and this evoked the intervention of the carabinieri.

Extensive anti-fascist demonstrations broke out in the principal cities of the country on Flag Day, November 28, 1939. Tens of thousands of peoples marched through the streets holding aloft the national flag and

shouting the slogans: «Down with the fascists! Long live free Albania! Liberty or death!» The demonstrations were especially powerful in Tirana, Shkodra and Korça.

Anti-fascist agitation took extensive proportions both at work centers and in the schools of the country. In January 1940 the students of the Lyceum in Shkodra staged a powerful rally coming to clashes with the militia. Fascists put many people under arrest. In a Shkodra intelligence report it was written that this anti-fascist rally «was organized and led entirely by the communists». Rather than submit to the order to salute in the fascist manner the students of the Korça Lyceum left their school benches. Similar anti-fascist rallies were held in many other centers of the country.

Faced with this powerful movement of strikes and political demonstrations which kept growing stronger from day to day, the fascist authorities were compelled to issue on April 11, 1940 a decree banning demonstrations, rallies, processions and meetings. This decree envisaged severe punishment including the death sentence for those who defied it. No fascist measures, however, could halt the anti-fascist movement of the people.

In the initial stage the main forms of the national liberation struggle were political manifestations, strikes, demonstrations and sabotage in the cities and the main centers of production of the country. As a consequence of the daily skirmishes with the fascists, of the increase of popular resentment and of the oppressive measures against patriots, the number of those who fled and engaged in clandestine political work to escape arrest became larger.

The growth of anti-fascist popular resistance, defiance of the law of the invaders, political demonstrations, sabotage and street skirmishes frustrated right at



the start the plans of the invaders to subdue the country as a whole, to denationalize and colonize the Albanian people.

Our people openly manifested their hatred towards the invaders also when fascist Italy embarked on its fight to occupy Greece (1940-41). Albanian soldiers, incorporated against their will into six battalions by the Italian fascists, deserted the ranks refusing to shoot on the Greek people. Many of them were disarmed and were confined in concentration camps. Nevertheless, Albanian patriots and communists gave direct support to the war of the Greek people. They hit the rear ranks of the Italian army and sabotaged the mobilization of Albanian citizens to join the ranks of the fascist militia. Mussolini himself had written to Hitler in connection with the defeat of the Italian troops on the Greek front, saying that this defeat was partly due to the fact that the Albanian people «had pointed their guns against the Italian troops». In the spring of 1941 and subsequently the resistance of our people increased.

The entrance of the Soviet Union into the war, as a consequence of the perfidious onslaught of Hitlerite Germany, gave a great impetus to the resistance of our people against the fascist invaders.

The communist groups organized and led major anti-fascist demonstrations like that of Tirana on October 28, 1941 which turned into a clash between the fascist armed forces and the enraged masses of people who fought against the enemy with fists, stones and clubs. At this time the resistance of our people grew to such an extent as to demand the setting up of a capable and loyal leadership which would unite our people and lead them in a war against the fascist invaders and their local collaborators for achieving freedom, independence and progress.

#### OUR FIRST EFFORTS TO EMBARK ON AN ARMED UPRISING.

The situation which was created raised the problem before our people either to rise up in arms against fascism in order to acquire national independence and freedom or to accept extermination as a nation and people because the situation was no longer what it used to be before 1912, 1920 or 1924. In order to guard against repeating former mistakes it was necessary to mobilize and organize the Albanian people in battle against fascism and its servitors and then to lead them in battle either to win freedom or die fighting. Just as for all other countries under fascist domination so also for our country, the war against fascism for national emancipation became the basic strategic task dictated both by our national interest as well as the international interests of the working class, and that without the war for national liberation there was no question of solving the other tasks standing before the revolutionary movement in Albania.

An urgent historic necessity was fulfilled with the founding of the Albanian Communist Party (November 1941). If our people had failed in the past in their struggles, the main reason lay in the absence of a sound, loyal and capable leadership and also in the fact that they had not had any assistance or support from any great Power, who would treat this matter on the principle of reciprocal parity and non-intervention in internal affairs. Both these matters were ultimately

solved when the Party was founded. The Party became the worthy leader of the war of the Albanian people and the Soviet Union, led by Lenin's and Stalin's Bolshevik Party, was the major Power, which by its very existence and fight, became the external decisive factor which, through its historic achievements, exerted a direct influence so that our people, thanks to their heroic struggle, would win their own freedom and independence.

Thus, the past and the circumstances created by the fascist invasion were well studied. The experience of the former endeavors and wars of our people indicated that without a correct revolutionary political leadership and without an armed struggle no endeavors of our people could wind up with success. It was up to the leadership to mobilize the broad masses of people, to train them in the ways of national liberation and of the people's revolution, to organize and lead them into an armed war against the fascist invaders and local traitors. There was no other way out but an armed uprising of all the people. And this way was taken. Right after its foundation the Albanian Communist Party agitated with great patience and perseverance among the rank and file, urging them through tracts, in meetings and conferences, to dare and do. This is what one of the early tracts in 1941 wrote:

«Italian fascism has for more than two years violated our country and transgressed against our people. Assisted by a few Albanians — its tools and traitors to Albania, — it has robbed us of our national freedom, it has tried to de-nationalize us, to corrupt our youth, to Italianize our schools. For more than two years the enemy has used our country as a base to penetrate into the Balkans and has turned this country to a battlefield against the national freedom of our fraternal Greek and Yugoslav people, it has bombarded our cities and villages des-

troying the homes and property of the peasants and city people, it has dispatched us as gendarms to suppress with blood the National-liberation Movement of the neighboring people.... Italian fascism has seized our land... is trying to sow dissention among different religious sects... has grabbed the people's bread... is compelling the peasants to turn over their livestock and grains to them...»

The tract continues:

«Faced with this situation we should not sit with hands crossed behind our backs. Therefore, we call on all decent Albanians, who really cherish Albania, to join our forces in order to place them in the service of our struggle for national liberation. Bitter fighting is the only attitude to maintain towards the invader. Every son of this land should be a soldier of the National-liberation War, to vanquish the enemy; our war should be well organized and a powerful one. Every Albanian should take up his arms and join the guerrillas..... Guerrilla warfare will be the most faithful expression of the will of the Albanian people to get rid of fascist bondage and to live a free life hereafter....»

This was the situation in Albania in 1941, i. e. two years after its occupation by Italian fascist troops. This shows clearly why our people, gradually but surely, maintained a correct attitude in favor of the national-liberation struggle against the Italian fascist invaders. This attitude of «bitter fighting» the enemy was attained to the end. Thus, the call to the people was the signal for an armed uprising. The uprising should be carried out to the end, without compromise. We took into account all the consequences that would ensue from the armed uprising of the people; we foresaw the development of the National-liberation war and mapped out the most suitable forms of organizing the war as, in



the first place, the partisan warfare combined with the other forms as strikes, demonstrations, sabotage, the elimination of Italian fascist exponents, proceeding from the firm belief that «people wanting to acquire their independence should not confine themselves to an ordinary method of warfare; mass uprisings, civil war, guerrillas throughout the country are the sole means through which people few in numbers can win over a more numerous enemy, through which a small army can face a stronger, better equipped and organized army.»

In order to solve the task of organizing the armed uprising the main support came from the vanguard class of the country, the working class, to which the historic role of leadership evolved, regardless of its being few in numbers; from the revolutionary spirit of the broad masses of people, with special attention to the laboring peasantry which made up the bulk of the population.

While calling for an armed uprising account was taken of the revolutionary situation existing in our country at the time. At that time the laboring masses had manifested and were manifesting deeper and deeper hatred for and were continually intensifying their resistance against the two-fold exploitation by the foreign fascist invaders and the traitorous feudal and bourgeois clique of the country. Their economic plight had become unbearable; they had been deprived of the most elementary democratic prerogatives by the ruthless regime of terror and the whip and by the attempts of fascism to assimilate Albania. That is why they welcomed most enthusiastically and responded with determination to the call for an armed uprising.

In the armed uprising of the Albanian people we note two principal stages: the initial stage of the armed

uprising which continues to the creation of the National-liberation Army and the stage of the general uprising which dates from the establishment of the General Staff of the Army and continues to the complete liberation of Albania.

While the beginning and the successful winding up of the armed uprising solved two fundamental problems that of the creation of the armed forces, the National-liberation Army, and that of laying the foundations of the new people's regime on the ruins of the old one. The most suitable way to set up the Army of National-liberation was that of partisan warfare. Guerrilla units and partisan bands were first set up and then, as the war grew more intensive, larger fighting units and detachments were set up preceeding the founding of the National-liberation Army.

It was necessary to proceed in this way for the former Army could not very well become an Albanian people's Army. It was in the hands of the ruling classes for the purpose of oppressing the laboring masses to the benefit of the feudal chiefs of the upper Albanian bourgeoisie and of foreign capital. The best example which showed that the army at the time of Zog's reign did not serve the interests of the people, was the case of its breaking up without firing a shot when the fascist troops attacked and overran Albania on April 7, 1939. Here was an opportunity to fight against invaders in defense of the independence and honor of the Albanian people. But it was not set up for that purpose. It had never occurred to its leaders that they would have to fight against fascist Italy, although Italian imperialism had long aimed at and strove openly to turn Albania into its own colony. On the contrary, they were the servants of fascism and broke up the army at the first signal of the fascist onslaught. These are the reasons

why the former Albanian army broke up together with the oppressive Zogollian monarchic regime which had set it up. Its commanding cadres, most of whom had been trained in fascist Italian military schools, became, in general, servants of the Italian and German invaders and served them in their war against our people and our country. Very few of the officers of the former army took sides with the National-liberation War.

#### THE WORK OF SETTING UP GUERRILLA UNITS

From December 1941 and the beginning of 1942 Party Regional Committees were instructed to set up guerrilla units composed of young patriots armed with personal pistols or pistols bought for them who, without quitting their jobs would carry on their activity in a clandestine way. The setting up of guerrilla units marked the initial phase of the armed uprising against the fascist invaders and local traitors. Led by local organizations guerrilla units launched surprise attacks on the enemy, blew up depots, carried out attacks against spies and traitors (these attacks were well studied and organized and were made against high ranking officials of the enemy or against those who had won the resentment of the people through their criminal political conduct), broke telephone lines, seized weapons from the enemy for use in the National-liberation war and so on. These actions kept growing in number and were subsequently centralized. Thus, as a typical example of the biggest and most centralized activity we can take the action which the guerrilla units undertook in June 1942. In this action the guerrilla units cut the wires and felled down the telephone and telegraph posts throughout the country. In the morning on July 25, 1942 no telephone or telegraph line functioned throughout Albania. An action of this kind deeply alarmed the military command of the Italian troops of occupation in Albania. A signal of this alarm is given in a telegram of the command of Italian troops in Greece to its superior command in



Italy: «The alarming situation in Albania jeopardizes our forces in Greece.» This action on a national scale reflected an important phase of the continuous growth of the liberation movement, an improvement of the quality of the armed war, a unification and growing centralization of it.

In addition to training persons who would form the guerrilla units and subsequent partisan bands in various regions, good all round political work was done with the masses. They were kept informed of the situation that had been created and were given instructions on the way to be pursued. Thus, they were being primed for fighting an enemy superior in strength and in military technique. The masses were also informed of the internal and international situation and were convinced that victory lay on the side of the people.

The great success which the guerrilla units scored through their actions throughout the country proved that the beginning of the armed uprising was fully justified and in time. The beginning of the armed uprising was a great test fraught with difficulties because, on one hand, there was a lack of cadres, of financial means and of weapons and, on the other, the guerrilla war which comprised at the start but a few hundreds of people, had to be waged in a place where the fascist invaders had an army consisting of about 100 thousand troops equipped with the most up-to-date weapons and military technique.

But even under such circumstances the armed uprising was continually assuming broad proportions. With a view to stopping the spread of the National-liberation Movement, the fascist invaders and local traitors resorted to a ruthless and unparalleled terror against our people, imprisoning, deporting, torturing, hanging and shooting people. A clear and eloquent example of such ruthlessness

can be read in a circular issued in August 1942 by the quisling fascist prime minister of that time. The circular meted out a death sentence to all persons working for the National-liberation Movement. It wrote *inter alia* «... It is altogether useless for these elements (the people of the liberation movement) to fill up jails and molest judges, they should die at the scaffold». At these critical moments, the leadership of the movement taught the people that the only response to give to the enemy is to intensify the war according to the principle: fist to fist, blood to blood, fire to fire.

The guerrilla units were the first schools of the armed uprising. In their ranks there were trained the first military and political cadres for partisan detachments and the members of the guerrilla units were the unknown soldiers of the revolution. The daring military actions of the guerrilla units were resounded far and wide throughout the country and served as an important link between the warriors and the masses, increased the activity of the movement, prepared the conditions which would lead to an extension of the liberation war.

The activity of the guerrilla units and the rapid growth of their number prepared the favorable conditions to pass over to the organization of partisan bands.

### FORMATION OF PARTISAN BANDS, BATTALIONS AND GROUPS

In pursuance of instructions issued from the Party Central Committee in the spring and summer of 1942 a number of partisan bands went into action in addition to the guerrilla units.

An important role in increasing the number of partisan bands and in extending the National-liberation War of the Albanian people was played by the Peza National-liberation Conference held on September 16, 1942.

The Peza Conference which was attended by representatives of the Communist Party as well as the representatives of Youth, of the Albanian Women and non party patriots from all the walks of life, sanctioned the unity of the people, laid the foundation of the anti-fascist National-liberation Front and of the rule of the National-liberation Councils. It approved the program of the movement and set the task of preparing for a general uprising of the Albanian people and stressed the need of setting up the General Staff of the people's armed forces in the heat of battle. More than 20 partisan bands were in action throughout Albania by the end of 1942.

The way pursued in setting up partisan bands, which were a higher form of organization of the armed struggle in general, was this: Party Organizations sent from the cities to the countryside a number of communists and other fighters from the ranks of workers who had given proof of their courage in battle of the guerrilla units in various actions and who had shown their fidelity to

fight the enemy to the end and charged them with the task of setting up partisan bands. These comrades most of whom had been exposed in cities so that their further stay in cities had become impossible, were the nuclei of the partisan bands-to-be which were set up and multiplied mainly in the countryside. The countryside became the base of partisan bands, because of the oppressive conditions existing there and of the aspirations of peasants for land and freedom. This base was prepared with much effort and patience.

At first the work with peasants was very difficult. Although the bulk of the peasants hated the alien invaders and traitors and were prepared to fight against them, they were disheartened by past experience and manifested some reserve, nor could it be expected that they would at once accept the leadership of the party. At the beginning those who were sent to the villages for agitation met with mockery, disdain and opposition of the peasants who often called them greenhorns who knew not what they were doing. But before long more intensive work was done and the peasants were being convinced that the National-liberation Front was an organization capable of amassing the patriotic forces and of leading them in battle for national liberation and social emancipation. The peasants were greatly allured by the prospect of the lands being turned over to them; so that gradually they came to consider the leadership of the movement as their own. Elements and whole groups of peasants who had been persecuted by the fascist invaders and local traitors, especially the young who had refused to be enlisted or who had deserted the ranks of the reactionary army, joined the partisan bands. Other peasants after them responded to the call of the movement and took up arms filling the ranks of the partisan formations. At the same time



workers, artisans, students, employees and others kept fleeing from cities to join the partisan formations. It was in partisan ranks that the alliance of our working class and the peasantry was effected.

What was the make-up of the bands? Proceeding from the knowledge that our war was a national-liberation one there could be no limit as to the make up of the partisan formations. The bands were open to all those who were determined to fight against fascism but not to those whose past was questionable. Nor were they open to fainthearted cowards who might cause demoralization among the partisan ranks. The Party exerted much effort to include as many workers, poor peasants and young persons in the ranks of partisan formations, as possible.

The number of fighters in a band reached usually to 50 or 60 persons, but the band could be made up of more or fewer numbers.

Together with its commander the band had also its political commissary appointed by the regional committee of the Party. He was the representative of the Party in the band and was considered as such by the partisans and the people. He was responsible to the Party for carrying out its political line in the band and in the territory where the band carried out its work. The political commissary was not plenipotentiary in the matter of commanding the band just as the commander was not plenipotentiary either. The Commander and Commissary made a joint decision on what the band should do as well as on matters of principle. Nevertheless, the Commander was given priority in deciding matters of a military character. The Commissary had no right to over-rule the orders of the Commander except in cases when these orders were at variance with the political line of the Party, with the interests of the War

of National Liberation or in any other case when treason on the part of the Commander was involved. The Commissary was the political organizer and educator of the band. The Party charged with the duty of Commissars such comrades as were tested to be loyal to the last to the cause of the people.

A cell, a local organization of the Party was set up in every band and all party members took part in this formation. The communists elected the secretary of the cell by open ballot. In the majority of cases at the beginning the Commissary could also be elected to the post of secretary of the organization, whereas later on the secretary was always another party member. The cell held its regular meetings in two weeks at most. It took up matters connected with military operations, with armaments, with the life of partisans, with their conduct in the band and among the people, in connection with the political agitation among the peasants and so on. The cell discussed and decided on admittance of new members to the party or on expelling from its ranks such members who violated gravely the discipline of the party. Every decision was made valid after the approval of the regional committee or of its plenipotentiary.

In addition to «organizational» meetings the cell held also weekly or bi-weekly «theory» meetings at which speeches were heard on the theory of marxism-leninism and on matters of the international communist and workers movement, on the October Socialist Revolution, on the history of our country and so on.

Both the Commissary and the cell of the Party in the bands were directly dependent on and received instructions from the Regional Committee of the Party.

The Commissaries and the local organizations of

the Party played a decisive role in the matter of setting up the armed forces of the National-liberation War. They held always high the morale and warlike spirit of the partisans, imparted to the fighters the spirit of unbounded love and loyalty to the people and to the country, the spirit of proletarian internationalism and of love for the Soviet people and for all peoples fighting against fascism. They raised the standard of good fellowship, of good comradeship, of partisan friendship to heights never attained before. The Commissaries and Party organizations organized the work of eliminating illiteracy among fighters.

Partisan bands have done extremely valuable work in raising the political and warlike standard of the masses of the people in the war against the invaders and local traitors. Not only the Commissary but every other partisan too was a fiery agitator for the line of the war for national liberation. Immediately after ridding a region of the posts of the carabinieri and of the fascist militia the partisan formations dissolved the local government of the sub-prefectures, communes, and municipalities and replaced them with the freely elected national-liberation councils. While engaged in military operations the partisan formations took active part at the same time in setting up the new people's regime and, on the other hand, took over the protection of this regime from the enemy, protected the people of the liberated regions from robbers and spies, assisted the national-liberation councils in settling blood feuds and various other conflicts etc. Thus, our army assumed a political character right from the start. It sprang up as an armed force of the people and of their government.

The people on their part considered the partisan formations as their own new army on the making and gave them all the support they could. Plain individuals

of the population imparted information to the partisans on the movements, number and armaments of the enemy, captured spies and all dubious persons moving about in the liberated regions; the houses of the peasants became the shelters of the partisans; in the cities, the masses of people gave freely of their cash, clothes and medicaments; women knitted flannels and sewed clothes for the freedom fighters. The funds of the National-liberation War were created with the aid the people gave and these funds gradually increased and keeping pace with the growth of the movement without which no National-liberation Army could be formed, enlarged and strengthened.

Bands spent most of their time in military operations, in organizing National-liberation Councils, in political work with the masses of people. What other time was left was used for military drill, for taking lessons on the partisan tactics of warfare and particularly on the use of weapons. Every partisan mastered in a very short time the art of using not only the weapons he bore but also all the kinds of weapons in the band. One could rarely come across a partisan who was not a brilliant sharpshooter. The partisan bands were equipped with conventional rifles, submachine guns, and pistols, hand grenades, light machine guns and, at a later time, with heavy machine guns, mortars 45 mm howitzers. Most of the arms were of Italian make captured in military operations against the enemy. But various other arms were also in use such as Turkish, Greek, Servian, French, Austrian, Belgian ones left over since the time of Turkish occupation and of the First World War. The people had concealed these weapons carefully and had not turned them over to the authorities in spite of the many strict orders, threats and search warrants issued by Zog's regime and the Italian fascist invaders. No



heavy armament were kept for the bands were in continuous motion. With such kinds of armament it would be difficult to maneuver.

As far as military discipline is concerned, it was deficient from the formal point of view but in essence it was very strict, conscientious relying mainly on carrying out the order of the Commander and of the Commissary to the letter. Many fighters have made the supreme sacrifice in order to carry out the duty assigned to them.

A typical characteristic of the partisans portraying a very important aspect of their military discipline, was their high sense of integrity in their conduct towards people and their property, their deep respect for commanders and commissaries, their respect for their fellows.

The partisan salute consisted of raising the right fist over the eyebrow. The distinctive badge of the partisan consisted of a black two-headed eagle on a red background and the red star over it. These are the characteristic insignia of the flag of the People's Republic of Albania today.

The fascist invaders and their collaborators — the landed gentry and the bourgeoisie — tried their hardest to hamper the further spread of the armed uprising of our people. After the Peza Conference they set up «Balli Kombëtar» (= the National Front) with the breakup of the National-liberation War in its program. To achieve this the reactionaries signed in March 1943 a protocol with the Commander of the Italian troops of occupation in Albania on the basis of which they promised not only to abstain from attacking the Italian troops but also to protect them from partisan attacks and, in cooperation with them to smash and exterminate the liberation movement. On the other hand, these traitors tried their uttermost to weaken the alliance between

the working class and the peasantry. Keeping intact the influence of customs and old prejudices, the former feudal relations, the submission and ignorance of the people, they, included in the protocol also some democratic slogans. But the war itself proved they intended to deceive the peasants. The correct, farsighted policy of the Party to unmask and then to bring about the political and military collapse of the Balli Kombëtar preserved and strengthened the alliance of the working class with the peasantry, kept amassing the people in the National-liberation Front, kept spreading the partisan movement.

In bitter, unequal skirmishes the partisan formations liberated village after village bringing freedom and justice to the people. A new life began wherever the partisans trodded. Every partisan was a fiery agitator for the program of the movement. The bands and larger partisan formations after them spoke patiently to the people about the aims of the war and the sacrifices which should be made to achieve victory, settled blood feuds, helped in meeting other needs, opened courses against illiteracy, gave performances of minor theatrical pieces exposing the enemy and urging the people to fight against them. All of these went towards educating the people who got closer to and more intimate with the partisans, these decent and valiant persons who spared not even their lives to rescue the people for which the latter thought very highly of them, and in most critical moments sheltered and shared their food with them in defiance with the enemy.

In addition to active partisan bands, territorial units were set up in all more or less bigger villages or two or three villages together. The latter were not stationary but assembled only when enemy formations

were in sight or when called to assist the permanent partisan units.

The partisan bands kept launching surprise attacks on outposts of the carabinieri or fascist militia, on enemy convoys on the march, set fire to depots, seized arms, munitions and various other military material and so on. A disfavorable situation was thus created for the fascist invaders. The Italian fascists and their servitors were kept in a continuous state of alarm and that is why they asked for urgent steps to be taken to relieve their critical position. Speaking of the partisan forces and the danger and difficulty of subduing them the fascist authorities of the city of Gjinokastrë in the southern part of Albania went so far as to conclude that: «The red army formed and distributed throughout the region is not such as to be easily vanquished». They referred by this to the organization of the armed partisan struggle.

The enemy acted with major severity against the partisan movement. Thus, in September 1942, immediately following the Peza Conference, the enemy started an extensive operation against the Peza region which was the base of considerable partisan forces. This was a zone bordering with the Capital, Tirana. In the combat that ensued the enemy suffered great losses and failed in their mission.

The liberation of Çorovodë during the early days of September 1942, the center of another important region of partisan forces in the Berat district, and many other operations spread alarm among the enemy ranks. The war was waged by zig-zag movements, attacks and retreats, according to the criteria of partisan warfare, hit the enemy and then hit him again unexpectedly on another spot, avoiding frontal attack against the superior forces of the enemy. This of course demands bases

of support, a thing which is achieved by explaining to the compatriots the aims of the movement, its program, by linking up inseparably with them and by setting a personal example even risking one's life in carrying out the requirements of the program which represents the vital interests of the broad masses of people.

In reprisal, the enemy burned many villages, killed and tortured many people. But far from forcing our people to their knees these beastly acts embittered them further against the invaders. The war became more bitter. Of more prominence in this period was the battle at Gjormi, a village southeast of the city of Vlora. Worthy to mention in these encounters is that of about 2000 armed troops of the enemy who were confronted by, incurred losses and were forced to retreat by a partisan unit relying materially and morally on the strength of 300 volunteers of the people. The partisan and popular forces were led by Comrades Mehmed Shehu and Hysni Kapo, now Party and State leaders of the People's Republic of Albania. After bloody encounters that lasted three days on a row (December 31 to January 2, 1943) the enemy was forced to retreat leaving behind among the killed and wounded also the commander of the operation, Colonel Clementis of the Italian fascist army.

The war of our people against the fascist invaders assumed large proportions. Whereas in 1942 the partisan bands went into action against the enemy in isolated groups, at the beginning of 1943 they were in touch with one another. Thus, for instance, on January 16, 1943 the partisan bands of the Korça district, besieged the fascist military garrison of Voskopojë and after three hour fighting put it altogether out of action. In the same way the Mokra unit and the three partisan bands of Gore-Opër, besieged the outpost of carabinieri



at Snosmi and after a bitter battle exterminated it as a whole. The enemy forces were besieged, entrapped and, as a result, 170 enemy carabinieri and soldiers were captured alive.

Another combined operation was that of the partisan bands of Vlora and Mallakastra on February 10, 1943, against the forces of the Patos oilfields where 80 fascist soldiers were made prisoners and many others were killed, the oil wells were destroyed, the electric station was burned down and much war material was captured.

These were only a few of the main operations of the partisan units at that time. Tens of other military operations were made in all regions of Albania, as a result of which whole regions were liberated during the period from September 1942 to February 1943.

Enraged by their inability to master the situation becoming more and more critical for them the Italian fascist invaders, assisted by the traitors to the interests of the people, embarked on a campaign of massacres of the population, killing women, children and the aged, burning down the houses of the peasants, plundering, raping with a view to intimidating the people and to forcing them to give up their armed resistance and to stop giving aid to the partisans. At Peza, Vlora, Voskopoja, Dardha and elsewhere Italian militiamen and carabinieri killed and slaughtered many individuals of the population, burned down hundreds of homes. But fascist terror did nothing but enhance the resentment of our people towards the enemy and brought the masses nearer to the Communist Party and the General National-liberation Council, raising the number of partisans. On the initiative of the Party the masses of the people and partisans gave an immediate response to the acts of terror of the enemy. In cities the shops closed, people

took part in demonstrations of protest, guerrilla units which, far from slackening their efforts after the formation of partisan bands, intensified them, killed off spies, fascist military and civil personalities, set fire to depots and offices of the enemy. In the countryside the partisans launched fresh military attacks. Instead of moving away from the war the people expressed more compactness in the war against the enemy, felt stronger and had more faith in final victory.

In order to wean the people away from the armed struggle against the fascist invaders elements of the traitorous Balli Kombëtar too exerted a great deal of effort. They spread such slogans as: «let us not fight against the Italians for we shall be burned and killed», «we cannot fight against Italy for it is a great Power», «let us wait for the proper moment to fight» and others like these. At the same time and in order to give the impression that it was also opposed to the invaders, Balli Kombëtar created its own «bands» which «would start fighting at the opportune moment», i.e. a few days prior to the capitulation of fascist Italy. According to this plan reaction intended to keep the political regime in the country unchanged and to change only the government.

Since Balli Kombëtar was not exposed yet there were people simple enough to take sides with it, but inspite of this it could not hamper for long the National-liberation Movement. The National-liberation Movement went a long way in explaining and exposing to the masses the hostile slogans of this traitorous organization, while elements of this organization themselves revealed their anti-popular and pro-fascist features, for they did nothing but sabotage the movement. Their very aim compelled them to do this. All attempts of the General National-liberation Council to pull Balli

Kombëtar out of the blind alley into which it had plunged itself gave no positive result for it (Balli Kombëtar) was opposed to the war against the fascist invaders. The bands of Balli Kombëtar started to sabotage quite openly the military operations of the partisans by giving informations to the enemy on the movements of the partisan bands, threatening to hit the fighters of the liberation movement in the rear in case they launched attacks on the Italians. The traitors had taken upon themselves the task of protecting the Italian forces and of acting together in smashing the partisan bands. The war of the people compelled these traitors to reveal their true features and to drop into the lap of the enemy, becoming servants at first of the Italian fascists and later of the German ones. But nothing could put the brakes on the war of the people which forged ahead.

The heroic war of the Albanian people against the Italian fascists aroused the admiration of and was highly praised by all the world. Through their heroic struggle the Albanian people placed themselves in the ranks of the most active members of the anti-fascist coalition.

The first Conference of the Albanian Communist Party held in the country during the period from March 17 to 22, 1943, devoted its main attention to the strengthening and further extension of the national-liberation war, to the setting up of the National-liberation Army, already in the making. The Conference arrived at the conclusion that it was high time to take concrete steps towards organizing a centralized army. In its resolution we read *inter alia*: «To set up the regular National-liberation Army out of the partisan and voluntary units which will strike terror to the invader and be a sure and powerful guarantee for the liberation of the people».

Fighters from people of all the walks of life, espe-

cially from the peasantry and from youth should be enlisted by free volition into the ranks of the National-liberation Army. «The Peasantry», the Conference pointed out, «makes up the bulk of our people and, therefore, it should be the mainspring of forces for the present war». Other matters treated in detail at this Conference besides this were the creation of new partisan detachments, battalions, groups and brigades, mapping out the military zones and locating the General Headquarters of the National-liberation Army, establishing links between the staffs and National-liberation Councils, supplying food and clothing to the army, imparting political education to the freedom fighters, setting up partisan courts of justice, enforcing discipline and training fighters in the technique of partisan warfare and other organizational matters. These would all go towards establishing a powerful rearguard and a centralized leadership of the partisan army which was in the making. Since the new popular army in the making was essentially different from all points of view from the former Albanian army and from any other army of the capitalist countries, no army of the old type could be taken as a model on which to build it. The building up and experience of the Soviet Army and of the Chinese Liberation Army were the examples to be followed in building up our army.



**FORMATION OF THE GENERAL STAFF AND ITS ROLE,  
THE SETTING UP OF LARGER DETACHMENTS AND THE  
CROSSING OVER TO THE PHASE OF THE GENERAL  
ARMED UPRISING**

With a view to putting into effect the historic decisions of the first Conference of the country, the Central Committee of the Party took a number of steps to organize the National-liberation Army, to set up battalions and regional staffs. By June 1943 the number of partisans had reached to 10,000, incorporated in 30 partisan bands and 20 battalions (a battalion was made up of 3 or 4 partisan bands). In addition to these some 20,000 other partisans formed the peasant bands of volunteers and the city guerrilla units. The creation of the General Staff was dictated by the indispensability of centralizing operations and of counteracting the wide range of enemy operations. The make up of the Staff was a mixed one including not only communists but also patriots of all the walks of life. It took speedy measures to organize the army. It raised its efficiency and authority through hard work.

The consolidation and multiplication of partisan detachments as well as the creation of partisan groups and regional staffs was accompanied with repeated assaults against the Italian fascist invaders which were characterized by an extensive participation of forces and a coordination of military operations of a number of partisan detachments.

On May 16, 1943, 350 partisans of the Korça district

surrounded and attacked the Italian garrison at Leskovik composed of over 500 persons. The enemy garrison would have been totally annihilated had not large forces from Korça, Permeti and Greece come to their rescue. Nevertheless, the Italian fascists were forced to withdraw at once. The retreating enemy was hit again by partisan detachments. About 200 enemy soldiers and officers were killed, tens of others wounded and 30 were led away as prisoners, and 12 trucks and armored cars were destroyed at the Battle of Leskovik.

Military operations after the formation of battalions, especially at the Permeti action, were of a much larger scale and more so because it was combined with the partisan detachments of the Korça, Gjirokastra and Berati districts. 1250 partisans all told took part in these skirmishes under a joint operative staff. The assault which began on July 1st covered both the enemy garrison at Permeti and that at Kuçari where about 700 enemy soldiers equipped with all kinds of weapons were concentrated behind fortifications. Large forces came at once from Berati, Gjirokastra and Tepelena supported by aircraft to rescue the besieged. After 5 days of bitter fighting at Permeti, Kuçari, the Kiçoku Pass, the Mezhgorani Gorge the enemy suffered great losses: over 500 soldiers and officers killed, tens of vehicles destroyed.

At the same time (July 6) the Albanian partisans had their first encounter with the German fascists who were proceeding from Korça to Janina in a convoy. In this operation the enemy left about 60 casualties behind.

The failure of all the maneuvers of the enemy to check the growth of the National-liberation Movement, the daily expansion of the armed uprising, infuriated the Italian fascist invaders and the internal reactionaries concentrated at that time around the Balli Kombëtar. The partisan war brought about frequent changes in

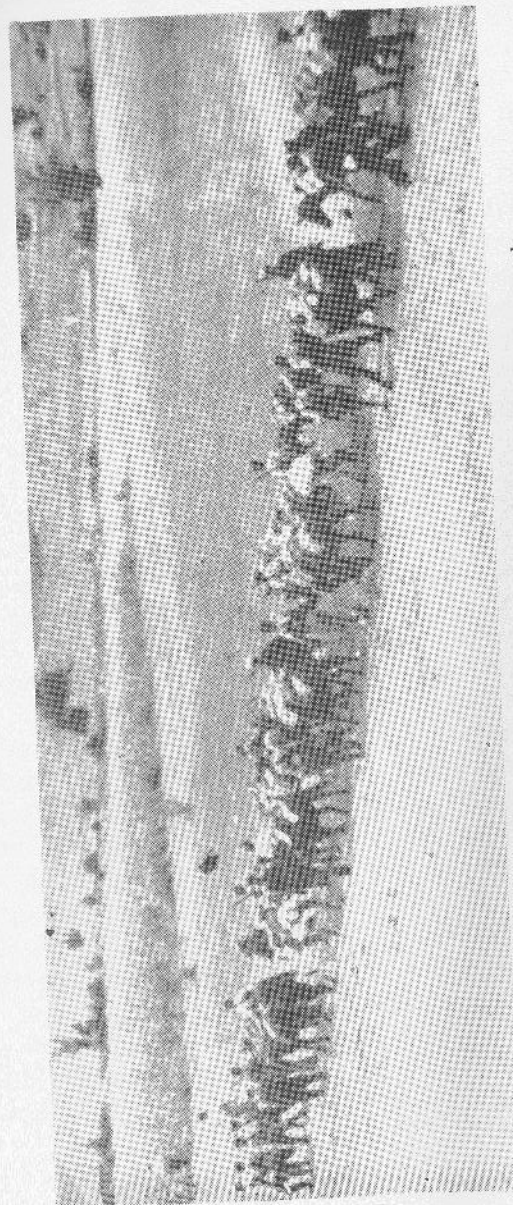
Kuisling governments which served the invaders. The revolutionary crisis became more and more acute. The reactionaries were faced with a situation which they could not control despite the use of oppressive methods; the masses of the people were highly recalcitrant.

The replacement of Jacomoni\*) with a military man, General Pariani, as Lieutenant of Victor Emmanuel and Mussolini was a sure indication that fascist Italy had definitely renounced their policy of «persuasion» in Albania and that from now on there was nothing else to do but to suppress the National-liberation Movement by military means. According to directives received from Rome the Lieutenant and the Supreme Command of the forces of occupation drew up a plan of operations in order to do away with partisan detachments and to strike terror on the population through extreme measures of terror. In carrying out this scheme the invaders had secured the support of all the traitors to the country, including the Balli Kombëtar (as in the operations against Peza, Mallakastër, Tepelena and so on).

By special decree of the Lieutenant of the King of Italy, General Pariani, all the territory of Albania was declared as a base of military operations. But no measures taken by fascists could check the expansion and the irrepressible consolidation of the armed struggle of our people.

With a view to liquidating the anti-fascist armed struggle the Italian invaders carried out repeated operations in about 30 different districts of Albania from September 1942 onwards through 1943, throwing whole divisions against partisan detachments. During these operations they resorted to all kinds of terror but were unable to exterminate the partisan bands.

News of the success of partisans and defeats of the enemy spread like lightning among the masses of the



Partisan artillerymen of the 1st Storm Brigade on the march



population and this kept imparting new strength to the National-liberation Movement.

The headquarter of the National-liberation Movement was always in touch with partisan formations. It issued instructions and took steps to build up the National-liberation Army as soon as possible. In June 1943 it issued instructions to form the First Partisan Brigade, made up of fighters from all the districts of Albania. «The formation of the 1st Brigade and of battalions» — it was written in the letter, «strengthens the faith in the development of our war towards the general uprising». Meanwhile the Party Central Committee launched the slogan among the masses of the people for the creation of the Albanian National-liberation Army. The call of the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party addressed to the people in June 1943 wound up with these words: «Long live our Partisan National-liberation Army of Volunteers!»

The armed struggle in Albania was assuming more and more the character of a general people's uprising. Under these circumstances the Central Committee of the Party proposed to the General National-liberation Council in its 1943 July meeting to set up a General Staff and to take concrete measures in organizing the National-liberation Army based on the existing partisan bands and battalions and the regional staffs. The decision to form the General Staff was announced on July 10, 1943. This date has entered into the annals of our people as the day of the founding of our army.

The National-liberation Army was now led directly by the General Staff. All matters of building up the army and mapping out its operational and strategic plans were solved on the basis of directives and instructions of the Party Central Committee. Comrade Enver Hoxha who filled the functions of the Commissary of

the General Staff, saw to it that the line of the Party was correctly put into application by the army. Matters concerning the organization, growth and consolidation of the army were handled by all the members and candidates of the Central Committee of the Party without exception as well as by the Regional Committees.

Immediately after it was set up, the General Staff reconfirmed and issued new instructions and set to work to organize the National-liberation Army, to direct detachments and organize the war against the enemy. It issued the decree on the creation of the Partisan National-liberation Army of Volunteers and established the organism of the army. According to the organism fixed by the General Staff of the Partisan National-liberation Army of Volunteers there would be the following formations: bands (or companies in brigades) as basic subdetachments, battalions composed of 3 or 4 bands, brigades composed of 4 or 5 battalions. Battalions and bands of one district should be included in one group led by a single staff. Whereas regional staffs and the staff of the first operative zone of Vlora and Gjirokastra would direct the partisan detachments of the districts.

In accordance with instructions already given by the Central Committee the First Brigade of the Albanian National-liberation Army was set up on August 15, 1943 under the direct auspices of the General Staff. At first it was made up of about 500 fighters from all regions of Albania. The Brigade had no limited zone of operation but was, so to speak, a reserve at the disposal of the General Staff which would operate and maneuver from one district to another as the need might be.

At this time the Albanian National-liberation Army boasted of a roll call of 10000 fighters, incorporated in regular partisan formations. But in times of fighting

during enemy operations or of major partisan actions the number of fighters usually increased two or three-fold.

Another step of major importance taken by the General Staff for the National-liberation War and especially to protect the new people's regime which was being set up and consolidated in the heat of battle, was the organization of the partisan military authority (district and local partisan commands). Every district and local command had a number of partisan guards. District commands were dependent on staffs of districts and zones. The Partisan military authorities were charged with the task of mobilizing volunteers for the National-liberation Army, with the task of securing the necessary food and material for the operational forces, of protecting the authority of the National-liberation Councils, of keeping order and peace in the liberated areas, of organizing the health service: hospitals for wounded and sick partisans, of organizing the information service, of laying traps for and catching thieves and murderers, of fighting against «the fifth column» and so on. The district and local commands carried out their work in collaboration with the National-liberation Councils and helped the latter enforce their decisions.

The setting up of the General Staff marks one of the most important events in the history of the National-liberation War of the Albanian people. «The creation of the General Staff» Comrade Enver Hoxha has said, «inaugurates a new stage in the war of liberating the country, the general uprising of the people against the invaders had already started». This major event was the final upshot of the correct marxist-leninist line and heroic efforts of the Albanian Communist Party to organize the general uprising of the people against invaders and traitors, to build up the National-liberation Army.



After the creation of the General Staff the armed struggle in our country assumes a wider, more organized and, consequently, a more bitter character.

The General Staff played the principal role in carrying out the basic marxist-leninist principles of the armed uprising in our National-liberation War.

Right after its creation the General Staff issued an order to the staffs of partisan detachments couched in these terms: «You are hereby ordered to deal ceaseless and merciless blows on the army of the invaders.... Do not in any way wait for them to hit us, but be always on the offensive, in the highways, in their barracks, on their depots of war material and everywhere where Italian and German soldiers and carabinieri are assembled!»

The problem of keeping the partisan war always on the offensive was the daily concern of the General Staff. In every case of any partisan detachment neglecting, even for a short while, this basic principle of the armed uprising the General Staff took severe disciplinary measures and communicated these measures to all commands of the army.

Here it must be pointed out that the creation of the General Staff, of the district and regional staffs, the setting up of larger formations as brigades, did not affect the character of partisan warfare of our armed struggle. It preserved this character to the end even when the divisions and army corps of the Albanian National-liberation Army were set up. The Battle of Tirana alone had more or less a frontal character. Under conditions when our armed forces were inferior to those of the enemy in numbers, in military preparedness, in armaments, in transport facilities, provisions and other necessary military requirements, a frontal war would be fatal for our armed uprising. Moreover, our National-

liberation War was not an isolated war from the general anti-fascist war which was headed by the Soviet Union. The armed struggle of our people and of other enslaved peoples was a war behind the lines of the enemy, an auxilliary war of the general war against the common enemy — the fascist aggressors. The General Staff of the Albanian National-liberation Army had this well in mind. The General Staff kept ordering the staffs of partisan formations to avoid frontal warfare and attacks in spots where the enemy desired, that partisan attacks should be launched by surprise and places least expected by the enemy. In November 1943 the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party instructed: «Our comrades must know that the tactics of our war is the same as before, that is guerrilla warfare».

In their operations against our National-liberation Army the enemy too, especially the German fascists, resorted to the same tactics as «the partisans used». By resorting to such tactics the Hitlerites launched in the fall of 1943 a number of surprise attacks with smaller forces in the Korça, Pogradeci and Peza districts and caused considerable damage to the partisans. The General Staff drew the attention in a severe way to the commands of the partisan detachments in these districts for being so neglectful as to allow the enemy use our tactics and said to them «It is we and not the enemy who should use partisan tactics, the enemy should bear its effects.»

The creation of the National-liberation Army was a major military and political success of the Albanian people. By setting up the General Staff the Party carried out on a larger scale the laws and regulations of an armed uprising. It solved the keyproblems of the armed uprising in the heat of battle.

### SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF CADRES

A problem of most importance of our national-liberation army was that of securing commanding cadres. The military and political leaders of our army could not be trained in military schools and academies but within the ranks of partisan detachments and units, from the ranks of workers, peasants and patriotic intellectuals, among the most daring and most faithful persons. These cadres sprang and grew up in the bitter school of the war where they learned to organize and direct with skill the military operations against the enemy and come off triumphant over Italian and German officers and generals of academic training.

The Party trained its commanders and political commissaries from the ranks of the popular intellectuals and workers, from plain peasants in the heat of battle. The Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party gave repeated instructions not to be reluctant about promoting new elements into higher positions, who had given proof of their valor, of their loyalty to the cause of the people, of their ability to lead. The increase of partisan detachments continually increased the need for new cadres. Some commands, faced with this exigency, applied for help to superior commands. This is the reply a battalion commander asking for cadres received from the General Staff: «This request of yours strikes us dumb.... It seems that you have not yet understood that battalions and bands are the mainspring of commanders and poli-

tical leaders. It is in war and in battle that these leaders are born..... You ask for political leaders but who else could turn out better political leaders than the battalions and bands which are always striving and fighting; they are the only sources for political leaders».

The General Staff and especially Comrade Enver Hoxha, its commissary, showed particular concern in strengthening and educating military and political cadres. They emerged and were tempered in the heat of battle of the armed struggle of our people. «Right in the earliest days of the anti-fascist war the Party was faced with the problem of training leading cadres. It was with extreme daring and exquisite skill that the Party solved this problem. It instructed partisan detachments and units that cadres would emerge from the war itself. Bitter skirmishes of unequal strength would bring to the fore the capabilities and qualities of every partisan. The most determined and capable, the bravest and best disciplined were appointed commanders and commissaries» (Excerpt from a speech by the Minister of People's Defense, General-Colonel Beqir Balluku, delivered on July 10, 1963).

Our cadres received their theoretic training studying the instructions and directives of the Central Committee of the Party and of the General Staff. Whereas they broadened and perfected their ability to direct their detachments wisely and courageously in all kinds of fighting through their practical activity.



### SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE TACTICS OF PARTISAN WARFARE

Relying on the marxist-leninist science on the tactics of partisan warfare our war cadres elaborated and developed these basic principles in organizing, developing and directing the war. Special importance was attached to revolutionary sense of duty as an essential quality of the roll call of our army dealing with the knowledge of our partisans of the role and tasks of our National-liberation Army, of the aims of our war. Thanks to the political and ideological work done our fighters were imbued with a high sense of revolutionary duty towards the just war they were waging, towards the historic mission they were performing towards the country, towards the anti-fascist bloc and all progressive people the world over. Ideological and political education made the partisans selfconscious, inoculated them with higher virtues of valor, fidelity, wisdom, vigilance, loyalty to the country, to the people and party, hatred for the enemy and respect for all anti-fascist fighters.

The determination of cadres and partisans to carry the war to the end without a compromise and to achieve victory was another principle on which the General Staff was based in educating the ranks of the army. It was due to this that the partisans demonstrated rare valor and marched ahead every where and every time and always came off victorious in their encounters with the fascist invaders and the traitors to the country.

An element of the tactics of partisan warfare was

also that of surprise which aimed at hitting the foe when and where he least expected. The commanders and commissaries achieved this through long distant marches, through difficult pathways, at night, in bad weather, in rain and snow, and in this way achieved positive results.

Partisan commands made skilful use of the principle of the main stroke too, a principle which was dictated by the very nature of partisan warfare when enemy forces were superior in numbers and means. Under these conditions it was essential to concentrate the main partisan forces in the decisive direction in order to attain superiority over the forces of the enemy and to achieve victory. This principle was widely used in the National-liberation War. Thanks to the masterful and speedy realization of this principle at a given moment the partisan commands could create superiority of forces at a given point.

Rapid and short attacks, which gave major effect to achieve success in surprise assaults against enemy forces, was always at the center of attention of the General Staff; that is why it always urged partisan detachments, big or small, to continually harass and cause damage to the enemy. Those detachments which acted otherwise were criticized by the General Staff. Reproaching the staff of a battalion in September 1943 it wrote: «That staff has not yet understood the tactics of partisan warfare. Partisans must never be on the defensive. The stay in a stationary position is defensive warfare which might lead our army into a major conflict with the enemy that might exterminate it. It is essential for you to change tactics; our tactics is to be on the offensive».

For larger formations, especially at the time when brigades and then divisions were set up, the General

Staff resorted to maneuvers. The brigades and divisions moved from one district to another. They amassed sufficient forces in organizing an important military operation. At the beginning this principle was adopted by the 1st Brigade which maneuvered with speed, through long distance marches, hitting the enemy without respite. The good experience of the maneuvering of the 1st Brigade served also for other brigades. The brigades of our army made extensive use of maneuvers, particularly during the winter and June campaign of the enemy. A typical example of a successful maneuver was, no doubt, the incursion of three battalions of the 1st Brigade from Tomerica to Shengjergj, in the bitter days of winter 1944, that of two battalions of the 4th Brigade from Opari to Devolli in March 1944, and especially that of the 1st Division from Mokra and Verça to Peshkopia, Mati, Lura during the summer of 1944.

Special attention was devoted to initiative as a principle of primary importance. The Central Committee of the Party and the General Staff exerted much effort in imparting this quality to the partisan forces. Even in most critical situations when the enemy had begun operations in one or more districts and taken the initiative from the partisans, partisan commands and formations tried hard to regain the initiative from the enemy. As example to illustrate this we can take the transfer of military operations of considerable partisan forces as those of the 1st Division, to central and north Albania in June 1944, at the time when the enemy had launched its big June offensive against the main forces of the National-liberation Army in southern Albania.

Initiative in military operations secured uninterrupted successes, raised the morale of partisans and of the people, demoralized the forces of the enemy. In the

letter which the Commander of the 1st Division, Comrade Mehmed Shehu, sent to the staffs of brigades under his jurisdiction, in October 1944 he wrote: «...The very nature of partisan warfare compels the partisan to resort to and develop the spirit of initiative. The spirit of initiative is indispensable; without it no partisan war can be waged...»

The General Staff expected these main principles of partisan warfare to be mastered and applied with consummate skill by all cadres, by all male and female partisans.



### THE PROBLEM OF SUPPLIES AND ARMAMENTS

Another major problem during the National-liberation war has continually been that of securing arms, munitions and clothes for the partisan formations. These problems were brought to the fore by the popular character of the war itself having nothing at its disposal. The Party kept pointing out that the main source where to find weapons and supplies was the enemy from whom these things should be seized in battle. But when the General Staff was set up there were a number of commanders who turned to it for supplies of weapons and clothes. To put an end to such unreasonable requests and to all erroneous views about supplying the army which might slacken the fighting, the General Staff wrote the following to a partisan command: «Such requests come as a surprise to us. It must be borne in mind that we started the war without any other help but that of the people. We should not rely upon any other eventual help (not even upon that of the allies) for it is so inappreciable as to deserve no mention.»

It thus became clear to all commands that our clothes and armaments should come from the enemy, seized from them in battle. And it could not be otherwise.

The National-liberation Army inherited no available technical and military basis worth mentioning. All the weapons and military equipment of the former army were seized by the Italian fascist invaders.

During the war one heard murmurs like these: «On

what shall we vanquish the enemy?... Where are our weapons? Shall we do it with five rusty rifles?! We have no ammunition, no clothes, no bread! How can one fight without these?!», and these words were uttered not only by cowards and with bad intentions, but also by plain, naive persons.

These matters perplexed the minds of people who could not draw the necessary conclusions. And in fact the problem had to do with the beginning of the armed struggle to carry out the minimal program of the liberation movement of our people. There was no place here for illusions. Our country was situated behind the lines of the enemy and occupied by it. The will to fight was not lacking, but immediate help from the anti-fascist coalition was not to be expected. And yet the country had to be liberated by war.

Under such circumstances logic led to the opinion that the war was impossible, but the leaders of our National-liberation Movement arrived at the conclusion that the war was possible. We would find our bread, our sandals, our clothes among the people and we ourselves possess the political sense, determination and ability to fight. We lack arms, we will snatch them away from the enemy. To start with, we can get a few rifles from the people; they will readily give them to us.

«The people and the enemy are the inexhaustible mainspring of supplies and equipment for the partisan army». This is the directive the Party Central Committee gave to the leading organs of the war throughout the country.

Thus, this directive created the necessary premise for supplying the partisan army with arms and equipment. But this premise was yet a possibility which required a lot of hard political, persuasive and explanatory work among people to turn to reality and to secure

their support for the program of the Party and to expose the demagoguery of the feudal bourgeoisie who had fallen into the lap of the invaders and to undermine their false authority among the people, factors which were a serious drawback in developing the war. Without the moral support of the people one could not expect to have their material support. One should bear well in mind this circumstance, for in an atmosphere of general enthusiasm, in the atmosphere of socialist construction and of a sound political unity it would seem a natural thing for the people to share their daily loaf with the party and army which was fighting to emancipate them, but under conditions of the country in bondage the people would not be ready to do this without previous preparation. The moral and political unity we see today did not exist at that time because of the dissident and fraudulent work of the feudal bourgeois chiefs and, consequently, the people did not have the same idea of the position of the country from the point of view of independence and of the need to fight. The people began gradually to see things in the right prism thanks to the good work of the Party opposed to the views and demagoguery of the feudal bourgeoisie who had betrayed the interests of the country.

It was not to be expected that the people would spontaneously become a powerful support of the partisan army, a continuous mainspring of supplies for it, and to accept all devastating consequences of the war without securing their support in the political front.

The people's support of the partisan army from the material point of view would at the same time mean political support, in other words, their stand in this matter determined their position as to whether they are for the situation created by the invaders and the treacherous ruling classes or against it, that is, in favor

of the war for the emancipation of the people and independence of the Fatherland.

Naturally, it was not so light to fight and pursue the second course and it became harder by the fact that traitor chiefs described the existing status as a diverseness of the independence of our country which according to them, would not require human sacrifice and material loss and this created confusion.

Therefore, when the directive of the Central Committee refers to the people being the mainspring of inexhaustible supply for the partisan army, we should consider this as a solution in principle, as a possibility which would indeed require hard political clarifying work among the people, taking into account the concrete situation prevailing in our country. The people supplied the partisan army and became its depot gradually and to the extent in which they embraced the line of the liberation war and became convinced of its justification.

The people provided for the partisan army mainly lodging, food, clothing, aid in cash and, in rare cases, munitions and rifles. In addition to this, the army secured part of the material means and most of their weapons, munitions, medical and sanitary materials and others from the enemy in the field of battle.

In general, during the phase of partisan bands and battalions, the method of supply was that of distributing the fighters among the people, two or three or more partisans to each peasant family according to each family's economic standing. This method was preferred by the people for they could in this way cook something for the partisans. It was harder for them to give to the steward of the band or to the intendant of the battalion dry rations for the partisans for in such cases they could usually provide nothing but bread and onions or curds.



Dry food was generally collected when the band or battalion were engaged in battle or when they were on the march. The food was collected by the people's council and was handed over to the steward of the battalion or band who shared them out to the squads of the band or battalion according to their number.

As to clothes, they consisted in general of ready-made items offered by the urban and rural population such as socks, knitted goods, sandals and other items. Washing and repair of clothes was made by the families where the partisans were lodged.

In the phase of bands, battalions and groups there was no transport by beasts of burden to speak of. The heavy guns of the infantry were transported in the majority of cases by the partisans themselves.

When the forces were engaged in fighting the wounded and supplies were transported by animals provided by the people. With a view to keeping the movement of forces secret an extra food ration was given to the partisans to take with them when going to fight.

First aid was administered by the nurse or medical practitioner of the band or battalion while for further medical treatment the wounded were taken to the base of the battalion or to bases in the interior whereas in more serious cases they were taken secretly to the bases of the war in cities.

This was in general the apparatus behind the lines of the troops and the typical method of supplying the partisan army at the stage of bands and battalions.

Which are the characteristics that distinguish it from the structure and system of supply of a regular army?

a) Firstly, the entire work of the rear lines of the troops and the apparatus itself are reduced and simplified to a great extent as compared with the corresponding sub-detachments of the regular army. In engagements

with the enemy there was, we may say, no service of supply whatsoever.

b) Secondly, bands and battalions had no means of transportation of any kind in their organizational make-up.

c) There were no such adjuncts in the rear as workshops, depots, hospitals etc; which analogous with the regular army, would supplement the rear functions of an army.

There is no gainsaying the fact that under such conditions one cannot say that the task of supplying a partisan army was done well. On the contrary, major and daily deficiencies made the life of partisans very precarious. There was no fixed ration of food, no hot meals and no regular supply of clothes and health service.

But in an organization of the rear guard service of this kind there were some determining factors which are connected with the characteristics of partisan warfare at this stage and in the ratio of forces.

It is known that at the stage of bands and battalions free zones were set up in the hinterland where the power of the national-liberation councils was established.

These zones were detached from one another and with regard to the other part of the country where the enemy held sway, they were like isolated oases. These liberated zones formed the base of bands and battalions. The task of partisan sub-detachments at this stage was a two-fold one: firstly, to carry out a large scale propaganda work in the liberated zones with a view to gaining support for the National-liberation War and to swell the partisan ranks with fresh recruits and secondly, to launch short surprise attacks on enemy columns so as to cause as much damage as possible to their live forces and to seize weapons and munitions.

In discharging this two-fold duty the partisan forces had to scatter among villages for agitation and propaganda work and at times to get together as sub-detachments to engage in an armed action, that is, to transform themselves so as to discharge both their political as well as military functions. This transformation was effected very easily.

Under such circumstances partisan sub-detachments had to be very light-footed, easily to maneuver and freed from any encumbrances that might slow down the tempo of their movements. Therefore, the method of supply should not hamper their agility of movement. If these forces had been burdened with luggage behind them they would not have been able to keep up their speed, the secrecy of movement and their surprise attacks and, if they had also depots of foodstuffs to look after, they would be moving around a fixed region and would not have been able to discharge their political mission. Thus, it is not so much the practical difficulties, which in some cases could have been overcome, but the nature of activity of partisan forces at this stage that determined the method of their supplies.

On the other hand, it must be said that in general, at the stage of bands and battalions, the people could more easily supply foodstuffs and clothes to partisan forces because the latter were few in comparison with the size of the liberated regions, and the problem of reserves for partisan forces was not an urgent one.

The needs of partisans were met also in regions heavily devastated by the war. Nevertheless, because of various local factors it happened that bands and battalions were faced with critical situations from the point of view of supplies. On November 21, 1943, the General Staff issued instructions to a partisan formation in the Elbasan district to arrange for a safe place to store away

a certain amount of grain and fodder and do it as soon as possible. This place should be in some hidden corner away from roads of motor communication which were still under the control of the enemy. These reserves would be used during days of hardship and by order of the General Staff.

As the national liberation war grew up the liberated regions were extended forming whole districts where fascist rule had ceased to exist and the power of National-liberation Councils had been installed. Thus, for instance, from September 1943 onward, the enemy had lost control over the highways linking Gjirokastra, Tepelena and Vlora as well as Permet and Leskovik, Saranda-Konispol etc. By October 1943 there were 16 partisan battalions and an additional number of territorial battalions in the first Vlora-Gjirokastra zone of operation alone. With a view to consolidating the direction of the army partisan groups usually comprising three partisan battalions and territorial battalions of volunteers were set up. Five such groups of the partisan army were formed in the first zone of operation. The first group operated in the Gjirokastra region, the second in the Vlora, the third in the Mallakastër, the fourth in the Konispol and the fifth in the Permeti regions. Partisan groups had likewise been formed and were later formed in the Tirana, Berati, Korça, Elbasan, Shkodra and other regions.

The task of these partisan groups was to protect the liberated regions from incursions by the enemy, to set up and consolidate the power of the National-liberation Councils, to increase the ranks of the partisan army and to extend the liberated territory by force of arms. As can be seen the tasks of these partisan groups were greater because the forces making up the groups had also become larger.



Since the partisan army groups had to protect the liberated territory, they usually came face to face with the enemy, near the borders of the liberated zones. The problem of supplying partisan forces assumed greater proportions. The existing apparatus behind the lines was supplemented with the office of the steward of the group which had no means of transportation at its disposal as yet.

But meanwhile district commands were set up in Vlora, Gjirokastra, Berat, Korça, Elbasan and elsewhere. Thus, for instance, there were district commands in Theologo, Polican, Permet and elsewhere in the first zone of operation. The National-liberation Councils too filled wider functions of the state administrative power in favor of mobilizing volunteers and supplying provisions and war material for the army.

As to the apparatus behind the lines of the troops and means of transportation, they did not submit to any change because in essence the tactics of fighting did not change from that of the first phase, and, consequently, the method of supply remained the same.

The task of protecting the liberated territory was carried out as before, with the same tactics of fighting, keeping the initiative in war, dealing surprise blows on the enemy especially at night, or laying traps when the enemy launched large-scale attacks so as to inflict losses to their live forces.

At this stage, the function of propaganda and agitation by the partisan groups in liberated territory was more limited in extent and took place as a rule within the belt of their jurisdiction. Outside this belt they could not help consolidate the power of the National-liberation Movement.

The partisan groups had, first of all, to harass the enemy and protect the liberated territory because pene-

tration of enemy forces into these zones, be it ever so temporary, gave rise to reprisals, great damage to the economy of the people, it created mistrust among the people and was a political loss. Therefore, they had to always be in a state of military preparedness and keep in their hands some important points of support in order to protect the liberated territory. In the Vlora-Gjinokastr zone of operation these points of support were: the Borshi Fort, Cepo, the Çajupi Pass and so on, places which enabled partisan forces to maneuver and attack the enemy without suffering great losses. Other districts possessed also similar fortified positions.

From the point of view of auxiliaries at this phase a new factor had sprung up which had direct bearing on the matter of supply. Reference is here made to a large partisan force, like that of a group, which had to be transferred for a somewhat long period of time to villages in the periphery of the liberated territory.

These villages were unable to provide for so large a partisan force. A new way should be found to overcome this critical situation. It was necessary to organize economic aid from the inner regions of the liberated territory. The district commands, the local commands and the National-liberation Councils behind the lines provided this aid for the partisan army.

When the district commands were established behind the lines the supply of provisions for the army began to be better organized. The district commands organized the collection of aids and set up depots with reserve supplies. Part of these provisions were used by order of the General Staff. The regional and district staffs had also their own reserve provisions. They accumulated and bought raw material for garments and footwear as leather, rubber, woollen cloth, wool fiber for jerseys and socks, blankets, clothes and so on.

Thus, for instance, in the Vlora-Gjirokastra zone of operations in October 1943, the Permeti work center produced as many as 80 pairs of sandals and shoes a day and that at Polican as many as 150 pairs of underclothing, woollen clothes and blankets a day.

Field hospitals were set up in many villages of the above mentioned zone, all under the care of competent physicians and well equipped.

It is worth pointing out that the National-liberation Councils gave great assistance in organizing work centers, in equipping field hospitals and in creating reserves of provisions. They fixed the order of craftsmen to work in work centers (fifteen days a month), volunteer or for a reasonable wage according to the economic standing of each. The councils confiscated the parts of wealth (livestock, foodstuffs etc.) belonging to traitors and placed them at the disposal of the district or local commands to be used by them for the needs of the army. The councils took over the management of state pasturegrounds and the pasturegrounds belonging to traitors and their yield in kind or in cash were put first and foremost at the disposal of the army. The councils provided the necessary draft animals and fixed the order of peasants to transport provisions for the army and to evacuate the wounded. They kept an inventory of the animals captured by the partisan army from the enemy and turned them over for use to the people. During the period from October 1943 to April 1944 hundreds of draft animals belonging to the peasants transported provisions from one district of the liberated territory to another and even to poverty-stricken districts devastated by the war.

Thus, the people were the main source of supply. It must be said that the councils, taking into account the

emancipation of the poor peasants from exploitation and the hostile attitude of landlords towards the National-liberation War, exempted the peasants from any economic obligations to the holders of land estates and feudal chiefs. This linked the masses of the peasantry closer to the movement and increased the economic contribution of the people in many regions. The regions of Gjirokastra, Kelcyra, Mallakastra and others can be cited as examples in this respect.

Another major source of supply at this period was the war booty captured from the enemy. Successful operations against the enemy accounted for an increase in armaments and munitions in storage.

Many regions of the country had munitions, rifles and machine guns in store. Groups too had supplementary arms and munitions at their disposal for use in battle and to equip partisan newcomers.

As can be seen, in the interior of the liberated areas there was a well organized military and administrative power like the partisan guards and village councils, local commands and district councils, regional commands and regional councils, which would form the proper background for providing for the partisan army.

This was essential for the partisan groups were busily engaged in harassing the enemy and protecting the liberated areas. But this must not be taken to mean that they could always confront and break up all attempts of the enemy. The latter who controlled the roads and possessed the means for quick maneuver could in various directions create favorable situations and undertake local operations. Under enemy pressure partisan groups were now and then compelled to withdraw for a time and then launch their counter offensive. The presence of secret depots in the interior came in



handy for our forces even when the people evacuated at the approach of the enemy. Nevertheless, the partisan groups had established more or less the equilibrium of forces from the operational point of view.

But partisan storm brigades were also at work in the liberated areas. These detachments were directly dependent on the General Staff and acted upon instructions from it. These brigades were not always confined to the protection of any one area alone. They were the mobile striking force and made up the maneuvering force of the General Staff. In general they were directly provided for by the people during the time of occupation or movement, but when passing through poor and devastated areas the brigades were provided for by the secret depots which formed the reserves of the General Staff.

That is why partisan brigades unlike partisan groups had wider service of transportation by draft animals carrying provisions and munitions especially when passing through heavily damaged areas, transporting heavy mortar guns and mortar shells, the wounded and the sick. Partisan brigades sent the heavily wounded to the nearest field hospitals through the National-liberation Councils.

From a letter addressed to the command of the Dumreja battalion on November 21, 1943 one can clearly see the correct assessment which the General Staff makes to the problem of supplying the partisan army in the poorer regions of Elbasan, especially during the 1943-44 winter period. This letter wrote among others:

«Our army, which is scattered throughout the area of that district, must have a certain amount of food stored away for the hard days of winter. On the other hand, our mobile brigades which might eventually come that way must have a certain amount of food at specific

places so they can be provided for while operating in that region».

And after giving instructions on how to create these reserves and where to locate them, the letter proceeds: «In order to do this important job on which the lives of our troops during the hard days of winter and our success over the enemy and traitors depend, it is essential that that district appoint some comrades to be in charge having the assistance of the council and of all the comrades in the field».

The establishment of secret depots of foodstuffs has played a very important role in the life of the partisan army especially during the period of the 1943-44 winter and June 1944 operations. It is a known fact that the enemy launched these two campaigns with the ultimate intention of totally exterminating the National-liberation Army and establishing the rule of Quislings throughout the country. To achieve this end the enemy engaged in total warfare, making no discrimination between people and the army and resorting to the tactics of the scorched earth. The enemy devastated and set fire to all liberated regions they passed through. The basis of supply on which the partisan army depended, the reserves of the population, were annihilated. Under these circumstances the partisan army had to fall back on the hidden reserves stored away in time.

It is worth pointing out that, especially after the general winter campaign, the food situation became very critical both for the army and for the population. Hunger drove women and children away from some districts of Vlora and Gjinokastrë to the non-liberated lowlands. The evacuation of the people from these regions and the subsequent capitulation of the partisan army reduced to starvation — this was the objective of the enemy offensive. It was necessary to do something to secure

provisions not only for the army but also for the population which sustained the army. The only way out was to bring in food to the poorer and devastated regions. But how?

The Staff of the Vlora-Gjirokastra zone of operations decided upon and launched a powerful surprise offensive on the rich lowlands occupied by the enemy in order to liberate them even if only temporarily, to take possession of crops and haul them to regions threatened with starvation. Meanwhile the National-liberation Councils were instructed and had accumulated a large number of beasts of burden ready to haul the cereals hurriedly to the interior of the liberated areas.

The counter offensive scored great success especially in the Vlora region. Hundreds of quintals of grain belonging to exponents of treason were confiscated for the army. Thousands of additional quintals of grains were purchased by army stewards and by the people. In addition to this, a major work of propaganda was carried out among the people urging them to send their grain for sale in markets bordering the liberated areas. The National liberation Council of the Gjirokastra region helped poor families in cash to buy foodstuffs in the market. In the Tepelena and Kelcyra market places the stewards of partisan detachments were allowed to purchase grain only after the population had done so.

This is how the population and the army were provided for after the enemy winter campaign which left the scorched earth behind.

This operation of the partisan army the principal objective of which was to halt the exodus of the people from the liberated areas because of lack of food, shows once again that in sizing up the situation partisan staffs always drew the proper conclusions on the situation behind the lines, including, in the first place, the condition of the people for the people were the main source of supply for the partisan army.

#### THE 1943-44 WINTER CAMPAIGN OF THE ENEMY AND THE EXPLOITS OF THE NATIONAL-LIBERATION ARMY

After fascist Italy's capitulation (September 1943) our country was totally occupied by German nazi troops which had started to infiltrate into Albania as early as June 1943. By dispatching large contingents of troops to Albania the Hitlerite command protected the flanks of her troops in the Balkans, took over the bulk of the Italian troops and exploited our mineral resources of naphtha, copper, bitumen, coal and so on for the needs of its war economy.

All the Albanian reactionaries gathered around the Hitlerite military power. The Hitlerite command in Tirana, in collaboration with Quisling rulers and traitorous organizations did all they could, combining demagoguery with terror to waylay and intimidate our people, to detach them from the National-liberation Front, to force them to give up their arms. Traitors and Quisling rulers used the press and radio, delivering speeches to instill fear into the hearts of the people, describing the power of the new invader as invincible, claiming that resistance to it would bring nothing but burning and devastation.

But our people scorned at the «advice» of traitors and Quisling defeatists and, inspired by the brilliant examples set so far by the partisans, continued with valor and determination and full confidence in ultimate victory, the National-liberation war, which was really



an unequal but at the same time a glorious one. The working masses proceeded in battle, reviving and raising to a higher degree the war-like traditions of their ancestors. «He who fights for a right of this kind (the freedom and independence of the Fatherland) is twice as brave, his right provides him with such force and power that will never let him be vanquished» — are the words of Sami Frasheri, the patriot of the period of our national revival.

During autumn 1943 our National-liberation War became more intensive. The ranks of partisan detachments were swollen in the heat of battle. The 3d, 2nd and 4th Brigades came to being.

The Hitlerite command, having failed in both demagoguery and terror, reaping no results from imprisonments and deportations, meeting with failure in their operations against partisan forces in various regions, organized and launched a major campaign (with troops brought in from other Balkan countries) against all the regions of south, central and north Albania. This operation has entered into the history of our people and army as the 1943-44 Winter Campaign of the Enemy.

The Hitlerite command took great pains in preparing, organizing and launching the Winter Campaign its objective being to smash our National-liberation Army, to do away with its leadership and hamper in this way the victory of the People's Revolution in Albania through a large military force.

In this operation the enemy used troops of the 297th, 181st, 999th and 104th divisions numbering 45000 men in addition to the 10,000 mercenaries of the Quisling Government and traitorous organizations. Their Commander-in-Chief was the nazi General Fehn. Hitlerite troops were equipped with most up-to-date armaments of the times, rifles, automatic rifles, machine guns,

mortars and field guns of various calibers, armored cars, tanks and airplanes. Whereas on the eve of the operation, our National-liberation Army had 20,000 troops organized into 4 brigades, 9 groups and 17 battalions, armed with rifles, automatic rifles, light and heavy machine guns, light and heavy mortars and a few mountain guns.

In spite of the large forces it dislocated, the Hitlerite Command did not launch the campaign all at once, against all the liberated areas. It started with isolated operations, according to districts, and then threw all their forces on the whole of South Albania, where the main bases of the partisan forces were located.

The first operation broke out on November 6, 1943 against the district of Peza where the 3d Brigade and the Peza group were in action. After bitter fighting at Arbana, Laknor, the Brigade broke the siege and crossed over to Çermenika, while the Peza Group maneuvered within its zone until the German troops evacuated Peza. Ten days later, on November 16, the German troops, backed by reactionary forces, attacked the partisan forces of the Dibra region. Heavy fighting ensued. But finding it hard to operate in these zones because of the difficulties created, the partisan forces, on orders from the General Staff, withdrew leaving behind small partisan units for action.

Meanwhile, precisely on November 19, 1943, the enemy and traitors launched their campaign in the Mallakatra district where the 1st Storm Brigade had its quarters. The brigade had a hard time to maneuver and break through the enemy lines. The greatest obstacle lying in the way was the river Vjosa. In this critical situation the command of the 1st Brigade organized an ambush attack from the Symiza hill in order to waylay the enemy and to give time to the Brigade to cross the river on a barge which the enemy had not yet captured.

After a bloody encounter the partisans triumphed over the Germans, forded the river and crossed over to the Mesapliku district. On December 10 another operation started here. Bitter battles were fought on December 14. The forces of the 1st Brigade and those of the Vlora district inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Thus, for instance, they smashed a Hitlerite force of three to four hundred men at the battle near the village of Vajza. The same thing took place at Piloç and elsewhere. The German command intended to get to the rear of the partisan forces. Bitter fighting took place on December 20, 1943, along the Bolena-Vranishta line. After these battles the forces of the 1st Brigade maneuvered and crossed over to Lunxheria and Zagoria while those of the Vlora district launched a counter offensive and cleared the lower Kurveleshi and Mesapliku area from the bands of the traitorous National Front organization.

Other large German forces, gendarms and Frontists launched a campaign on December 19 against the zones of Central Albania where the forces of the 2nd and 3d Brigades, the autonomous battalions of this zone and part of the General Staff were located. The enemy forces numbered over 5,000 Hitlerites and 1,500 Frontist gendarms. They launched their attack in many directions. Bloody battles were fought everywhere, in spite of the bitter winter, lack of munitions, of food and of clothing. The forces of the 2nd and 3d Brigades, having incurred perceptible losses due to the superiority of the enemy forces, managed to cross over to other regions further north. Losses were due to ill-prepared bases, to the partisans coming from different regions, lack of sufficient compactness and to the panic among many partisans.

After these operations the Hitlerites launched, during the first days of January 1944, their general

campaign in three regions at once: Korça, Berati and Elbasan. What the enemy aimed at in the former operations was to force the partisan forces to withdraw to the south and then to block and annihilate them there.

Starting from different points the invaders launched their attack on a concentric form. But enemy columns were harassed in all directions. The battalions of the 4th Brigade attacked the enemy in the Korça district. The other nazi forces coming from Çorovoda to the Tent of Jars in Permet were stopped by the Skrapari Group and then were counterattacked and totally smashed also by two battalions of the 1st Brigade. The Battle of the Tent of Jars was one of the bloodiest encounters of the 1st Brigade; the Tent of Jars dominated Dishnica and the countryside all around. That is why the enemy should by all means be dealt the deadliest blows here to prevent them from outflanking our forces in Permet (of the 6th Brigade) and in Zagoria (of the 1st Brigade) and to block their way for a retreat.

The nazi troops launched a simultaneous attack on the Permeti, Zagoria, Lunxheria regions as well as on the northern regions of Shkodra, Tropoja, Kukes and elsewhere.

Typical is the fact that when the enemy thought they had made short work of the partisan forces in one region and moved their forces to another these partisan forces came up again before, behind and to their flanks and attacked them.

During the second half of February 1944 all the Brigades and territorial battalions launched their counter offensive. Of major importance in these military operations was the incursion of three battalions of the 1st Brigade into Central Albania, causing a true diversion behind the lines of the enemy, harassing them and preventing them from embarking on another large-scale operation.



The heroic struggle of our people and of our National-liberation Army frustrated the 1943-44 Winter Campaign of the enemy. Far from being waylaid and kowtowing to the invaders and traitors, our people maintained an unwavering, combative stand towards them, strengthened the ranks of the National-liberation Front and overcame with valor and determination the vicissitudes of war, provided the partisan detachments with food and clothing and took even part with arms, organized into peasant bands, against the German convoys. The Winter Campaign was another eloquent proof of the close link between the people and the party, of the unshaken faith of the people in the general line of the Communist Party.

During the Winter Campaign our National-liberation Army manifested in a brilliant way the best war-like traditions of our people leavened and improved upon by the Party, as the qualities of valor, loyalty, stability, determination and the spirit of patriotism and proletarian internationalism. The organizational structure of our army, especially the creation of brigades, demonstrated the appropriate striking force in every kind of encounter of partisan warfare. Our army emerged from the Winter Campaign with a rich fighting experience, stronger and greater in numbers. It was in the heat of battle that the 5th, 6th and 7th Brigades were formed.

The Winter Campaign showed that the General Staff had done good work in training capable and trustworthy military and political cadres, who directed the partisan detachments with consummate skill, carrying out the tasks and various forms of partisan warfare as attacking, defending, outflanking the enemy behind their lines, raising the siege, undertaking long distance marches to attack the enemy where they least expected, fighting at night and in bad weather, on rugged hilly



Partisans of the 3d Storm Brigade defy natural obstacles and maneuver to get behind enemy lines

and mountainous grounds, outmaneuvering the enemy and so on, as the need might arise.

Having successfully withstood the Winter Campaign of the enemy our army launched firm counter-offensives throughout South Albania. On March 7, 1944 forces of the 1st Brigade and of the «Reshid Çollaku» battalion encircled the bashi-bouzouk (irregular) forces of the enemy in the Korça district and compelled them to surrender. In March 1944 two battalions of the 4th Brigade totally smashed a German force in the fighting which took place at Sinica, Arza and Qyteza in the Devolli region.

During the early days of March of the same year the forces of the 5th Brigade began their attacks along the Vlora-Sevaster highway. At the same time, more precisely on March 14, the forces of the 5th and 6th Brigades attacked concentrations of Frontist forces at Sevaster, Amonica and Mavrova. At the same time sub-detachments of the 5th Brigade penetrating deep behind the lines of the enemy, launched a surprise attack on the Germans and traitors in the vicinity of, and in some cases, inside the city of Vlora, inflicting great losses on and sowing panic among their ranks. Some mistakes were made in the military operations at Mavrova. The enemy forces were not well detected. This caused heavy damage to our forces who came under the fire of the enemy.

The General Staff, sizing up the situation created following the Winter Campaign of the enemy and the successful counter-offensive of partisan detachments and units, issued in April 1944 the historic order to launch the spring assault. The Order had among others: «Attack everywhere in Albania the barbarous Germans, do short work with traitors.... hit the vital centers of the enemy, demolish depots and barracks of the enemy,



blow up bridges and demolish roads, attack and liberate the countryside and the cities of our beloved Albania! The destiny of our Fatherland is in our hands, the destiny of our beloved people in agony is linked with your weapons!»

The Order of the General Staff assigned to each district the principal objectives to be attacked and destroyed. Thus, for instance, it assigned to the partisan forces located in the Korça district the task of liberating Pogradec and Starova where the main Frontist forces had been concentrated. To do this the forces of the 1st Brigade, of the 4th Brigade and of the «Reshid Çollaku» battalion went into action and fought with might and main at Starova, Pogradec, Qafa Thanës and Ploça during the period from April 17 to 20, 1944. After capturing the Pogradeci citadel the partisan forces carried the fighting into the streets of the town and the larger buildings where the enemy offered a 24-hour long resistance. These buildings were set on fire and the nazis and mercenaries were forced to surrender. In this battle the enemy incurred these losses: 40 killed, 240 captives and a good quantity of war material captured.

The forces of the 7th Brigade and of the Berat district chased the enemy away from the surrounding villages and compelled them to shut themselves inside the city. In order to regain the ground they had lost the enemy came out of Berat in large numbers and took to Nahie and Shpiragu. Fighting continued for 7 days. The enemy was beaten leaving behind 80 killed, 44 wounded and 56 captured. On April 25, the 7th Brigade surprised and encircled 300 Germans at Peshta by the Osumi river. The enemy managed to withdraw leaving behind a lot of war material and 60 men killed.

Successful offensive operations were undertaken in the Vlora-Gjirokastra zone of operations by the 5th

and 6th Brigades and territorial battalions. On April 3, 1944, the forces of the 6th Brigade fought against 3,000 Germans and Frontists at Vajza and Gjormi smashing and causing them 70 casualties. In the same way, the forces of the 5th, 6th Brigades and of the 1st Group of the 1st zone of operations did short work of a German company, taking 37 captives at Velipot (a village near Tepelena) on April 7. On May 9 the 5th Brigade blocked the way to a large German convoy coming from Greece and heading for Permeti and inflicted 15 casualties and 24 captured on them.

Similar important engagements were undertaken by groups and territorial battalions at Peza, Kruja-Ishmi, Çermenika, the Northern Highlands, Devolli, Mallakastra and elsewhere.

During the Spring offensive, the National-liberation Army extended the liberated areas, increased its numbers by new Brigades as the 8th Brigade, and inflicted great damage to the German troops, and crushed the Frontist forces and gendarm units in a number of districts.

**OPERATIONS OF THE NATIONAL-LIBERATION ARMY  
DURING THE SECOND CAMPAIGN UNDERTAKEN BY THE  
GERMAN NAZIS AND LOCAL TRAITORS  
(MAY — JULY, 1944)**

Other districts were liberated after the failure of the Winter Campaign of the enemy and the spring offensive of the detachments and units of our National-liberation Army. The nazi invaders held the main cities and roads of communication and controlled part of Central and North Albania in collaboration with the reactionary forces of the Quisling Government, the National Front and Legality organization.

In a situation of this kind the historic conclusion was arrived at that both the internal and international conditions were ripe for our National-liberation Movement to have its own high legislative and executive organs and thus deal another political blow to the internal and international reactionaries, maintaining the initiative in the events which were rolling at full speed.

The Permeti Congress (May 24, 1944) was the most comprehensive, democratic and deserving representation which the history of the Albanian people had ever recorded that far. It successfully wound up its proceedings by electing the National-liberation Anti-fascist Council as its principal legislative and executive organ representing the sovereignty of the Albanian people and State. The Anti-fascist National-liberation Council elected its presiding officers from its ranks and appointed the Anti-fascist National-liberation Committee to fill the functions of a Provisional Government with

Comrade Enver Hoxha as its President. By appointing these organs the Permeti Congress sealed the victories so far of the National-liberation War and provided the movement with the organs that would lead it to the triumph of the People's Revolution, and, after liberation, to the reconstruction of the country by putting into effect such economic and social reforms as to open the way to the building of a new Albania.

At the Permeti Congress stress was laid with a feeling of joy and pride on the great success attained in organizing the regular National-liberation Army which had become the armed force to express the successful development of the General Armed Uprising and to ensure the realization of the objectives of the National-liberation War. The Permeti Congress, with a view to further consolidating the organization of the Army, pointed out the need of setting up larger military formations as divisions and army corps. Thus, the 1st «S» Division was set up on May 28, 1944, the 2nd «S» Division on August 4 followed by other divisions, the 1st «S» Army Corp on August 5 and the 2nd and 3d Army Corps later on. The problem of promoting military and political cadres was also taken up at the Congress. Comrade Enver Hoxha was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Partisan Volunteer National liberation Army and was awarded the rank of Colonel-General.

The decisions of the Permeti Congress were joyfully acclaimed by our troops and our people as a whole. They were of major significance in further strengthening our National-liberation Army, our people's armed champion, in liberating the country completely and in establishing the people's rule.

The military exploits of our National-liberation Army, assisted on a large scale by the population of the countryside and of the urban centers in frustrating the



June Campaign of the enemy, occupy a significant place in the annals of our National-liberation War.

Only three months after the failure of their Winter Campaign the German nazi command prepared for and launched its June Campaign for the purpose of destroying our National-liberation Army, of suppressing the armed struggle of our people so as to ensure free and unmolested movements for its troops on the highways of our country leading to Greece and Yugoslavia, especially on the eve of their retreat from the Balkans.

It wanted to give further vent to its hatred and savagery towards our people and our army fighting heroically to liberate the country and establish the People's Power. The nearer the Hitlerites approached the brink of the abyss into which the war of the people, by the forces of the Soviet Army, were pushing them, the more they massacred, burnt and devastated the peoples they held under sway.

While aiming at destroying our National-liberation Army the fascist command of the troops of occupation in Albania thought of doing some service to international reaction by halting the triumph of the People's Revolution in Albania, by obstructing the overthrow of the feudal-bourgeois regime and the establishment of People's Power. To this end aspired and worked also the English and American military missions in Albania at the time, who collaborated secretly and in the open with the German Command and with the counter-revolutionary forces of the National Front and the Legality Organization.

In its June Campaign against the National-liberation Army the Hitlerite Command used the very same forces it had used during its Winter Campaign plus the forces of the 1st Division of mountain troops which it brought from Greece. This time the enemy used about 3,500

troops. An additional 10,000 mercenaries, gendarms of the Quisling Government, Frontists, Legalists and bands of feudal chieftains were in the service of the enemy.

Although the Hitlerite Command used more troops and means in this than in the Winter Campaign, the general conditions were more favorable for our National-liberation Army. These conditions were: the authority of partisans had been greatly enhanced among our people who looked up to the Communist Party as their sole and worthy leader. The Army had largely increased in numbers. While there had been only 5 brigades and an additional number of battalions and groups on the eve of the Winter Campaign, now we had 9 brigades, 9 groups and an additional number of battalions and peasant bands numbering 36,000 troops in all. Partisans, their commanders and commissars had gained a rich experience during the former campaign and particularly during the Spring Offensive. Our Army had liberated all of South Albania except the main cities. The successful drive of the Soviet armed forces towards the Balkans was of further advantage to our armed struggle.

The Hitlerite Command moved its troops during the last two weeks in May and launched its offensive from the center towards the different liberated zones in south Albania on May 28, 1944.

A German column coming from Greece via Florina Bilishti (in the Korça district) entered the liberated zone of Devolli and after short but bitter skirmishes with the partisan forces there, managed to overrun the whole of the Devolli district.

Another German column coming from Elbasan marched towards Shpati-Gramshi-Moglica (in the Elbasan region) to join with the German forces which would come from Korça. This German column was first attacked by the forces of the 1st Brigade. On June 5 forces of

the same brigade launched a surprise assault at the Moglica Bridge (Gora) on a German column and killed 60 of them.

A third German column starting from Kuçova (now Stalin-City in the Berat district) intended to attack the forces of the 1st Brigade in the rear but failed to attain its objective.

A fourth German column coming from Berati and marching towards the Kiçoku-Kelcyra Pass encountered partisan forces of the 7th and 12th brigades on June 3 and engaged in bloody battles with them. Losses were inflicted on the enemy which were obliged to withdraw back to Berat again.

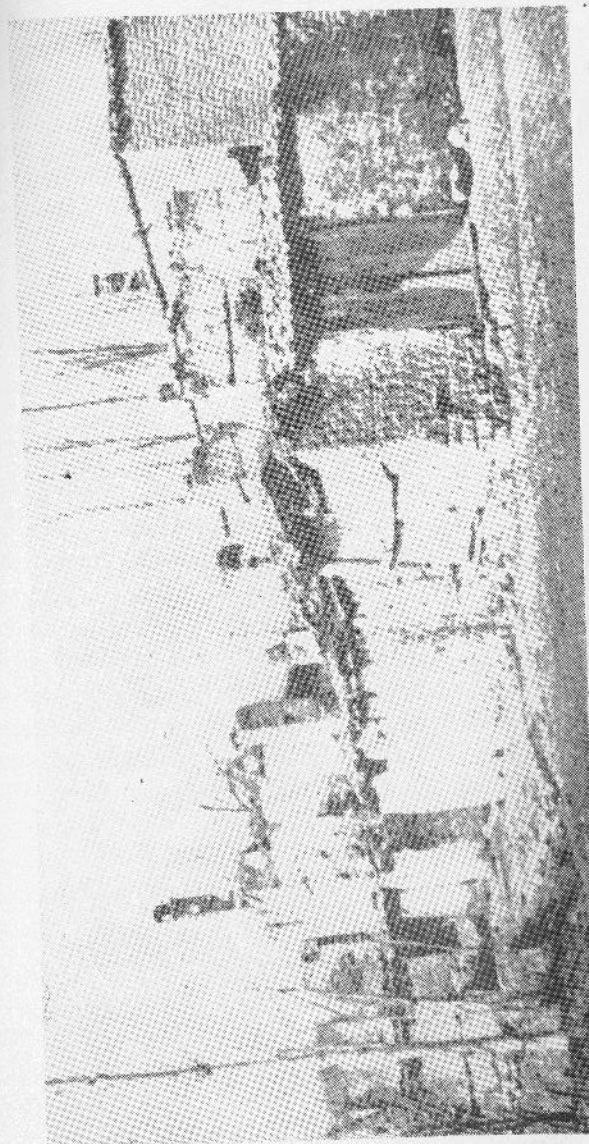
Again on June 3, three German columns attacked areas protected by the 4th Brigade from these directions: the first column marched through Mokra, the second towards Guri Kamjes whereas the third, coming from Korça advanced towards Opari. The 4th Brigade waged bitter battles especially at Guri Kamjes.

Other brigades and battalions engaged in battle wherever the Hitlerite forces attacked.

All of these encounters are included in the first operation of the enemy, where the total failure of their plans was so evident.

The second phase of the June Offensive started on June 5. During these days three German columns emerged from Korça, the first pursuing the Maliqi-Moglica direction, the second that of Vithkuqi — the Marta Pass and the third that of Voskopoja — the Beçi Pass, this latter one aiming at taking the rear of the partisan forces of the Berati district.

The forces of the 1st partisan Division lay in wait for these columns all along this line: from the Dushari mountain, Guri Prere, Qafa Gjarperit, Qafa Dardhes to Shemberdhej. At Qafa Gjarperi (the Serpent Pass) the



During their 1944 June campaign the Italian and German fascists resorted to the tactics of the «scorched earth»



partisan forces of the 5th Brigade fought the bloodiest battle against 800 Hitlerite troops. 150 of the enemy were killed while on our side 22 partisans fell in the field of honor and 12 were wounded.

During these days the 7th and 12th Brigades fought against German forces which were marching from Çorovoda towards the Tent of Jars and both here and at the Kiçoku Pass the fighting was waged at the point of the bayonet.

On June 8 other German forces attacked Dangllia coming up against the resistance of the partisans of the 2nd and 3d Brigades at the Dangllia Pass, at Radom, Tabor and the Kokojka mountain.

Meanwhile, the forces of the 8th Brigade engaged the German troops advancing towards Permeti for several days.

After the failure of their operations in the Korça, Berati and Elbasan districts the Hitlerite divisions marched towards the Saranda, Vlora and Gjirokastra regions launching their offensive against the partisan forces there in two directions. Forces of the 6th partisan Brigade waged bitter battles on June 9, 10 and 12 at Mesaplik, Shenvasi, Nivice-Bubar along the Vlora-Saranda highway. The Hitlerite Command began its large scale offensive against the partisan detachments of the 1st Vlora-Gjirokastra zone of operations on June 13. More than 20,000 Hitlerites as well as gendarms and Frontists coming from Tepelena, the Gjirokastra valley, Nivica and Mesaplik started their offensive with Kurveleshi as their main target, but, thanks to the determined fight of the formations of the National-liberation Army and the support they had from the volunteers from the population, the German nazi and reactionary forces failed in their undertaking. The same

fate was shared by the Anglo-American imperialists who had hoped that the main forces of the National-liberation Army, assumedly concentrated in the southern part of the country, would either have been crushed by the German troops or weakened and rendered incapable of serious military action for the future.

#### **LIBERATION OF THE COUNTRY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEOPLE'S POWER — FACTORS THAT DETERMINED THE ATTAINMENT OF THE MAJOR HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENTS**

Prior to the beginning of the June Campaign by the enemy the General Command had worked out an operational and strategic plan according to which the forces of the 1st Division of the National-liberation Army would launch their offensive north of the Shkumbini river so as to offset the Hitlerite offensive and, at the same time, to frustrate the plans of the Anglo-American Command to come to the rescue of the reactionaries.

The General Command did not change its plan regardless of the critical situation created at the beginning of the June Campaign of the enemy. The 1st Division launched its offensive on June 26 along a wide front extending from Qafa Thanës to the vicinity of Peqin.

The carrying out of this plan exactly at a time when the Hitlerites were continuing their operations in the southern part of the country was of major significance in keeping up the fighting and ensuring ultimate victory over the enemy. «This order of the Commander-in-Chief to the 1st Division to throw the enemy off their guard and penetrate deep behind their lines in central and northern Albania hitting them at their strongest bases, at their main reserves, was of major historical importance» 1)

1) — Enver Hoxha: Report to the First Congress of the Party of Labor of Albania — Tirana 1949, page 93.



The offensive of the 1st Division, marking the beginning of the general offensive of the National-liberation Army, took the German invaders and traitors by surprise. At first they thought that the partisan forces which crossed over to the north were remnants of the National-liberation Army «smashed» in the south taking refuge there. But when the fighters of the 1st Division together with the partisan battalions from Elbasan, Mati, Dibra and Tirana, penetrating deep into occupied areas, did short work of one enemy grouping, of one gendarmery post, of one reactionary band, after another, then and only then did the Hitlerite and traitors understand that they had to deal with an organized and powerful operation. This struck terror on them and compelled them to avow openly that their campaign in south Albania had failed, sounding the alarm for the impending danger threatening them. They began to withdraw their main forces from southern Albania and throw them northward for the purpose of crushing the 1st Storm Division. To achieve this they organized two operations one after another and in both cases failed incurring great losses in men and material.

To carry the successes of the National-liberation Army in central and northern Albania further ahead and in conformity with the plan of the General Command, the 2nd Division went into operation in the northern regions of the country. Forces of the 1st and 2nd Divisions and the other detachments of the National-liberation Army in central and northern Albania, in addition to engaging in military operations, assisted the people in consolidating the people's rule and in mobilizing all the people for the war of liberation. The brigades and the 1st and 2nd Divisions enlisted thousands of new volunteers from the newly liberated areas, while the battalions of these areas grew in numbers and were

promoted to brigades which, together with the 1st Division, were incorporated under the command of the 1st army corps.

Meanwhile other units of the National-liberation Army had also joined in the general offensive against German concentrations and communications in order to smash the enemy and liberate the cities they still held under their sway.

While the two Divisions were busy fighting to liberate central and northern Albania, other brigades and partisan detachments in southern Albania fought to liberate the principal cities inflicting great losses on the enemy. During the summer military operations the National-liberation Army grew by leaps and bounds. Through its ceaseless struggle it liberated cities and whole areas one after another.

Towards early October our army boasted of over 20 brigades most of which were incorporated into 4 Divisions and an Army Corps. Our Army had assumed the form of an organized, well disciplined and centralized army, with regular formations linked and in close collaboration with one another.

On September 15, 1944 the Commander-in-Chief of the National-liberation Army issued orders to the commands of partisan units to launch a decisive offensive to liberate all cities and districts, to smash the German fascist troops located in Albania.

Thus, on October 9 and 10 the forces of the 12th and 14th Brigades liberated Saranda. These same days forces of the 14th and those of the 19th Brigades liberated Delvina and cleared the entire coast of the enemy.

When the fighting of the Albanian people was at its height and the day of liberation in sight English military forces landed in Saranda in September 1944

under the false pretext of aiding us fight the Germans. But our Party, our army and our people were well aware of the real diabolic intentions of the English. The doom of the alien invaders was already sealed. The National-liberation Army had adequate forces to smash and drive away the foreign invaders and traitors and liberate the country by dint of its own efforts. Through their military forces the English and American reactionaries intended to intervene in our internal affairs, to take under their protection and collaborate more closely with the traitorous forces of the National Front and of the Legality organization already crushed in the field of battle, to rob the people of their freedom and independence they had won at great sacrifice, to obstruct the establishment of people's rule in Albania. But the English failed. Thanks to the persistence, determination and ultimatum which our Commander-in-Chief, Comrade Enver Hoxha, handed to them, they were compelled to withdraw with shame from our coastal region. This is a further brilliant example of the principled stand and keenness of our Party and of our leader, Comrade Enver Hoxha, not to allow in any way that the destiny of our people and of our country be trampled upon by the foreign imperialists.

The National-liberation Army was scoring repeated successes. In liberated Berat the second meeting of the General Antifascist National-liberation Council was held on October 22, 1944. Among other decisions taken it solved two basic problems. It turned the Anti-fascist Committee into a Provisional Democratic Government and, secondly, it approved the changes in functions of National-liberation Councils.

Comrade Enver put forth the main tasks that had to be accomplished at this period, namely, the extension and firm continuation of the fighting for the speedy total liberation of Albania.

And in truth, the struggle for the liberation of Albania had entered onto a very decisive phase. The 14th and 19th Brigades had liberated Vlora. The 2nd and 9th Brigades had liberated Leskovik and Erseka and on October 24 headed for Korça which they liberated in time. Other regions breathed freely in central and northern Albania. The only cities writhing still under the clutches of the enemy were Elbasan, Durrës, Tirana, Shkodra and Kukes.

By this time the treacherous «National Front» and «Legality» organizations and all reactionary armed forces had almost disappeared from the scene. Whatever was left of them gathered around the treacherous chiefs and groped for a way to escape. Their only hope lay in the landing of English and American forces on Albania to help them. When the English landed on the coastal regions near Saranda and entered there after it had been liberated by the National-liberation Army on October 9, 1944, reactionaries hailed them and spread the glad tidings far and wide, but the impetus of the war of the Albanian people and the firm stand of the Commander-in-Chief frustrated the plans of internal reaction and of the English and American ones.

The major military and political achievements the liberation of the greater part of the country, the growth and consolidation of the National-liberation Army created the necessary premises for the extension, perfection of organization and improvement of the functions of the people's government. An important role in this process was played by the Second meeting of the National-liberation Council which decided to turn the Anti-fascist Committee into a democratic government of Albania.

Meanwhile the command of the German army had commenced to withdraw its troops from the Balkans under pressure of and in the danger of being isolated



and crushed by the speedy advance of the Soviet Army led by J. V. Stalin towards the west.

The nazi troops in Albania had taken steps to hold the cities until the forces of the 21 and 22nd corps of the German «E» army corps located in Greece, would withdraw through Albania and cross over to Yugoslavia.

Complying with the situation at hand, the plans of the General Command for military operations by the National-liberation Army were motivated by this idea: the forces of the 1st Army Corps to undertake operations in central and northern Albania with a view to besieging and crushing the Hitlerite forces in their main garrisons and lines of communication, to razing the last bases of reaction to the ground, to consolidating the people's rule in the liberated areas and to enhancing the striking power of the National-liberation Army. Whereas the other forces in action in southern Albania to keep up the general offensive in order to achieve final victory.

Complying with the idea of the General Command the Staff of the 1st Army Corps worked out an operational plan for military action in central and northern Albania. This plan envisaged the concentration of considerable forces for the main stroke to crush enemy groupings and liberate Tirana. The other forces were to keep up fighting for the complete liberation of the areas in northern Albania by razing the bases of reaction to the ground, by exterminating its live forces and by helping to consolidate the people's rule in the liberated areas.

On the basis of this plan the units and detachments of the 1st Army Corps made all the necessary preparations during the months of September and October as finding out where the enemy was located, doing short work of the enemy garrisons charged with the outside

protection of the Capital, drilling for war in the city and so on.

In an order issued to the 1st army corps the Commander-in-Chief of the National-liberation Army demanded that «Tirana be freed without fail... no German be allowed to come out of there alive».

The assault on Tirana was begun by the forces of the 1st Army Corps (the 1st, 4th and 23d Brigades) on October 29, 1944. At the same time, in compliance with orders from the General Command, the 2nd, the 15th, the 17th and 20th Brigades were to hit the enemy garrisons at Prrenjas, Librasht and Elbasan and crush the enemy columns retreating via Struga-Elbasan-Tirana highway. While the 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th and 24th Brigades were to operate in various directions connected with the operations for the liberation of Tirana.

The largest part of the city of Tirana was freed during the first phase of fighting. The second and decisive phase of the fighting began on November 11. The operational staff to direct military operations at this stage was set up under the command of Comrade Mehmed Shehu. When the fighting was at its height the situation became complicated by the movements of the forces of a nazi division coming from Struga via Elbasan. Under these circumstances it became imperative to halt the advance of and annihilate the enemy columns heading for the city and endangering the forces of the National-liberation Army operating there. The operational staff took all the necessary steps to make short work of the enemy column, about 3000 strong, between Mushqetas and Ib in the vicinity of Tirana. The smashing of the enemy column at Mushqetas during November 13 to 15 played a very significant role within the framework of the general operation which was crowned with success

with the complete liberation of the city of Tirana on November 17, 1944.

In pursuance of their mission the forces of the National-liberation Army kept attacking the retreating enemy forces and liberating one town and region after another in northern Albania and on November 29 they made their triumphal entry in Shkodra. This historic date marks also the complete liberation of the country. The People's Power was established throughout Albania.

The Albanian people thus scored the greatest victory of their whole history.

The major historic victory of November 29, 1944 is the upshot of the National-liberation War of the Albanian people against foreign invaders and traitors, the upshot of the correct marxist-leninist line of the leadership of our Party and of its Central Committee with Comrade Enver Hoxha at the head. By following revolutionary principles it successfully led the people to an armed uprising as the sole means to achieve victory over the enemy, it linked the struggle of our people and our army with the anti-fascist struggle of all the peoples of the world and particularly with the great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union.

All measures, all decisions adopted by the Party regarding the armed struggle against the invaders and traitors complied with the urgent political necessities of the people and their interests. Every military operation undertaken by the National-liberation Army had at the same time a political character, was closely linked with carrying out the strategic objectives of the Party, the complete triumph of national independence and establishment of people's rule.

Our Party pointed out right at the start that the setting up of the army was an indispensable condition to the victory over the enemy; it founded and trained

it, it set out the forms of warfare and organization to suit the specific conditions of the times, it led it into many battles and, in the heat of battle, raised and consolidated it into an army of the new type, an army of the people.

When the country was completely liberated the old feudal-bourgeois regime ceased to exist and a new people's regime was established on the basis of the national-liberation councils which had already been set up during the war and sanctioned by law at the first Anti-fascist National-liberation Congress in Permet and at the meeting of the Anti-fascist National-liberation Council in Berat in October 1944. In this way, with the teachings of marxism-leninism as its guide, our Party liberated the country and, at the same time, solved with success the chief problem of the revolution, the problem of political power. The people became masters of their country and of their own destiny.

Through their long struggle under very critical conditions, the Albanian people and their army rendered a major contribution to the sacred war against Italian fascism and German nazism. Our fighting compelled the Italian invaders to maintain an army of 100,000 troops and the Germans 70,000 troops in Albania. The Albanian National-liberation Army inflicted on the Italian and German invaders 26,594 casualties, 21,245 wounded and 20,800 captured, it blew up 216 depots with ammunition and war material, it captured many guns, mortars, machine guns and other war material.

The war for the liberation of the country cost the Albanian people 28,000 killed, 12,600 invalidated, 62,475 houses burned down, hundreds of thousands of heads of livestock slaughtered and many other material damages.

One of the main internal factors that determined the victory of the Albanian people in liberating the country and establishing the people's regime was, no doubt, the



correct, marxist-leninist leadership of the Albanian Communist Party (now, the Party of Labor of Albania). Guided by the undying teachings of marxism-leninism and applying them in a creative way to suit the conditions of our country it succeeded in setting up such organizational forms as the National-liberation Front and Councils, in setting up and inuring the National-liberation Army, which amassed and mobilized the people to carry out the line of the Party, to fight hard and in an uncompromising way, against the fascist invaders and traitors to the country, and in leading to the general armed uprising which was crowned with the triumph of the People's Revolution.

Our Party honorably discharged its obligations because it held the unity of mind and action within its ranks as sacred and kept strengthening its links with the masses. It smashed the alien, anti-marxist views of anti-party elements, warded off the intervention of the Belgrade Trotzkyites into the internal affairs of the Party and that of Koci Xoxe, their agent, preserving in this way the purity of its ranks.

With rare courage, keenness and determination our Party frustrated the hostile aims of the English and American military missions, rejected the intervention of the English and American governments into the internal affairs of our country, during the National-liberation War, especially when they took the National Front and the Legality organizations under their protection, when they demanded that the 1st Division be returned from central and northern Albania to the south and when English troops landed in Saranda.

A great merit of the Party lies in its just and principled fight to crush the National Front, the Legality and other traitorous organizations. Without exposing and smashing them it would not have been possible to

secure the full support and as a consequence the implementation of the line of the Party by the overwhelming majority of our people.

Our Party discharged all its historic obligations to the people, to the country and to the international communist and workers movement because it was led by Comrade Enver Hoxha, the beloved son of our people and our gifted and experienced leader who devoted all his knowledge and efforts to the great cause of the people. Comrade Enver founded the Party, organized and tempered it as a party of the new type. He organized and led the work of setting up the National-liberation Front and of the National-liberation Councils. Comrade Enver's life is very closely bound with the creation, organization and consolidation of our National-liberation Army which he led from victory to victory.

Another main and decisive factor for the triumph of the National-liberation War, for the creation of our National-liberation Army and the establishment of people's rule is the fiery patriotism of our heroic people who raised to a still higher degree their glorious patriotic and revolutionary traditions for freedom and independence. Our people spared no efforts for achieving victory over the invaders and traitors. They were brutally terrorized, jailed, deported, plundered, burnt but they never kowtowed to the enemy, they never laid down their weapons.

The incorporation of the people in the National-liberation Front was a strong one for it was based on the alliance of the working class with the peasantry under the leadership of the former. The peasantry had learned from historical experience that it could realize its aspirations only in alliance with the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party, that is

why, it sided whole-heartedly with the National-liberation War.

The National-liberation Army was the armed force of our people in their struggle for national-liberation and social emancipation. No liberation of the country and establishment of people's rule could be effected without the army, without our armed struggle. The Communist Party has been the architect and organizer of our army. It was under its guidance and daily watch and ward that the army grew by leaps and bounds and, on the eve of liberation, comprised 70,000 men and women partisans organized in regular formations of 3 army corps with 8 divisions and 26 brigades.

The decisive external factor for the triumph of our people was the anti-fascist war of all the peoples, and first of all, the historic achievements of the Soviet people who bore the brunt of the war in the Second World War and who crushed the war machinery of nazi Germany by dint of the struggle of their glorious army led by the great strategist, J. V. Stalin.

#### MILITARY EXPLOITS OF OUR DIVISIONS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF OUR HOMELAND

The war waged by the forces of our National-liberation Army for the liberation of Kosova and other districts of Yugoslavia occupies a special and important chapter in the glorious annals of our army. In compliance with orders by our Commander-in-Chief, Comrade Enver Hoxha, these divisions pursued the Germans deep inside the territory of Yugoslavia, rendering in this way a valuable service to the Yugoslav people in freeing them from the common enemy. On October 13, 1944, on orders of the General Command of the Albanian National-liberation Army, in response to the request of the Command of the Yugoslav National-liberation Army, the 3d and 5th Brigades had crossed the state boundaries of Albania and kept up their fight against nazi troops for the liberation of Kosova. By the end of November and at the beginning of December, 1944 these brigades were joined also by the 25th Brigade. All the three brigades in question were incorporated in the 5th Division.

Having opened a very wide front the partisan forces of the 5th Division kept pounding the German troops who offered stubborn resistance in order to withdraw their main forces from the Balkans. The battles waged by the partisan forces of our Army at this time were really bloody encounters, particularly, along the Senica-Milashevdol-Priepolje and Novi-Varosh-Priepolje roads. Our partisan forces freed a number of villages and towns



of the Sandjak and came as far up as Priepolje which they liberated too.

Immediately following the liberation of Shkodra forces of the 6th Division also crossed the boundary pursuing the enemy towards Podgorica. Detachments of this division waged bloody battles and on December 2, 1944, liberated Tuzi and by the second half of the month of December had liberated Podgorica. The partisan brigades of this division launched their attacks against enemy troops and, inflicting on them great damage in lives and material, compelled them to withdraw from Montenegro and from many towns and villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina up to the city of Vishegrad for the liberation of which Yugoslav partisan forces took also part in fighting. The fighting here lasted over one month.

In Yugoslav territory our divisions fought under very adverse conditions, in mid-winter, on rugged grounds against an enemy greater in numbers, armed to the teeth and behind strong fortifications. But here too, just as in former battles, the men and women partisans of our divisions showed a high revolutionary spirit, determination and unparalleled heroism in overcoming difficulties and achieving victory. It is this that accounts for the fact that our forces overcame the vicissitudes of bitter winter, of lack of provisions and in no way encroached upon public property, taking from no one at any time as little as a potatoe, at a time when they had had nothing to eat for days at a stretch. They never entered a private house unless invited by the owner or accompanied by members of the council even if they were in danger of freezing to death when the temperature out-of-doors dropped to 15 or 20 degrees below zero.

The exemplary conduct and hard fighting of our



An Albanian mother welcomes her victorious son

forces in Yugoslav territory were an eloquent proof of the work which our Party had done in imparting to the partisans the spirit of proletarian internationalism, the devotion and respect for other people, the lofty conscience of considering other people's emancipation as a sacred duty of theirs. It was this that prompted our partisans to fight with such resentment against invaders beyond the boundaries of our motherland.

The heroism of our partisans in the field of battle and their correct conduct towards the people won for them the admiration of the population wherever they came to in Yugoslavia. The people welcomed with open arms the brave fighters of the Albanian people and, though economically crushed, did all in their power to come to their aid.

The Albanian partisans went through all these hardships in the name of proletarian internationalism, of love and brotherhood of peoples, just as our marxist-leninist Party and Comrade Enver Hoxha had trained them. The memory of 350 martyrs who laid down their lives in the common struggle for the liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia will live forever with our two peoples. A Senica mother's words will always sound so fresh when she said, as she saw the Albanian partisans off: «Tell the mothers, wives and sisters of those who laid down their lives for the liberation of the Sandjak, that the sun of our mountains will warm the place where their beloved ones fell just as the sun of your mountains. That spot will be revered by us with the same love and respect as by them themselves.»

But the communiqués of the General Staff of the Yugoslav army spoke very little of the bitter battles waged by our divisions in Yugoslav territory and said practically nothing about the sacrifices of the Albanian partisans, about their valor and manliness, for it pursued



hostile ends against Albania and its people even as early as that.

Their sinister aims are also corroborated by the denial and distortions which the Yugoslav revisionist pseudo-historians make of the fighting of our divisions in Yugoslav territory. We find these denials and distortions also in the album which the Institute of Yugoslav Military History published in 1957 under the heading «The Historical Atlas of the War of the Yugoslav people (1941-45).» Nothing is said in this album about the fighting of our divisions. Mention is only made of the participation of the 1st and 2nd Brigades of the Albanian National-liberation Army in the battles for the liberation of Kosova, a thing which does not correspond with facts for both of these brigades were assigned to other military duties at that time.

A little later, in 1958, in a book entitled «The National-liberation War of the Yugoslav people, 1941-45» published by the same Institute, we read that the city of Priepolje was liberated by the 2nd Army corps of the Yugoslav National-liberation Army, while nothing is said of the forces of the 5th «S» Brigade of our army which took part in liberating the Senjica district, the city and surroundings of Priepolje and other regions of the Sandjak. Similarly, this book makes mention only of the battles waged by the forces of our 6th Division against the Hitlerite fascist troops at Tuzi and its surroundings, whereas it says nothing about the great battle which the partisans of this division waged for the liberation of Podgorica, Leva, Reka, Medun and other districts of Montenegro and Bosnia, and especially, for the liberation of Vishegrad.

All of these falsifications of the Yugoslav revisionist pseudo-historians aim at denying the participation of our people in the battle for the liberation of Yugoslavia.

They intend at the same time, to quell the sentiments of friendship between our two peoples.

Our people and our army will remember with pride the fighting of our two divisions in Yugoslav territory. They are deeply convinced of Comrade Enver Hoxha's words that «there will be no force strong enough to turn to water the blood of our heroes», who, as true internationalists, laid down their lives helping the people of Yugoslavia in their liberation struggle against our common enemy.

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS BORNE IN MIND IN ORGANIZING THE NATIONAL-LIBERATION ARMY

The National-liberation Army could not be something set up on the spur of the moment and without a basis, but an organized army of the new type which would be set up under extremely clandestine ways, when the country was occupied by an enemy large in numbers and armed to the teeth. The liberation army to be set up should be a firm attacking force which would fight with might and main against the invaders for the emancipation of a people under bondage.

To achieve this all potentialities were turned to account to set up guerrilla units, bands of partisans and volunteers, battalions and so on. Where no bands could be set up guerrilla units came to being which grew during the war into partisan bands and larger formations. Where partisan bands were already in existence their number was increased by admittance of fresh fighters and battalions were formed. The national-liberation bands, battalions, groups (each group consisting of one or two battalions) of partisans and volunteers formed the basis on which the larger formations and, consequently, the National-liberation Army was formed also.

National-liberation bands and battalions of partisans and volunteers were always guided by the fact that, as they were to fight continually and without interruption against the invaders and traitors to the people, they had to resort to the method of partisan warfare, to be continually in motion until they would liberate territories to

serve as basis of support from which they could launch surprise attacks on the enemy, setting up ambushes along roads, liquidating enemy commands, centers of the gendarmery and of the militia, doing short work of traitors to the people (known as such), blowing up roads and bridges and depots of various kinds, cutting telephone cables and so on.

In order to achieve success in such operations preliminary steps were taken to make them both a military and a political success. Plans and objectives of every action were kept in great secrecy so as to take the enemy by surprise. Secrecy was one of the fundamental requirements to make each operation a success. When the enemy resorted to reprisals against people living in the vicinity of the place where the operation had taken place, the partisans came to their rescue.

Partisans always engaged in such military actions as would yield best results: that would inflict on the enemy maximum losses in men and material and would spare as much damage for our forces as possible. The partisans were always aware of the fact that the enemy tried their utmost to force a frontal battle on them with a view to vanquishing them more easily. But the partisans averted this through maneuvering. Thus, the partisan forces confronted the superiority of the enemy with the agility of their movements.

The partisans could use this kind of tactics to good advantage because they had gradually won the confidence of the people and, as a consequence, their support, too. The partisans maintained a very careful attitude towards the rural masses who were very backward both culturally and politically. They knew very little about the development of events and in many cases were misled by enemy propaganda. But in this respect we took great pains to avoid falling into sectarianism which



was the trend of especially the young and inexperienced fighters and leaders. This was always held in mind because also of the very fact that the main forces of our National-liberation War came from the peasantry.

A very well based criterium was followed in filling the partisan ranks. Partisan ranks could and should include all the respectable sons and daughters of the Albanian people who desired to fight against the invaders and their lackeys and who were determined to stand to the end, until ultimate victory was achieved over the enemy and traitors. No elements were admitted into the ranks of the partisan army who had served and continued to serve the invaders of their own free will, and particularly, those who had stained their hands with blood fighting against the National-liberation Army, those who had handed our fighters over to fascist authorities or who had had a hand in the deportations, imprisonments and burning of houses. Nor could the partisan ranks admit individuals whom the people disliked for their dirty behavior and who were considered as immoral, scoundrels, burglars and cutthroats. But, nevertheless, great care had to be taken not to dump all individuals into one sack but to differentiate between the conscientious and the unconscientious ones, those who had improved and those who had not.

Fighters who joined the National-liberation ranks of partisans and volunteers were trained and raised culturally, politically and militarily so as to have a clear idea of the aims and nature of the liberation war and its importance, and become conscientious workers both in the field of culture and politics, worthy leaders of the partisan movement. Partisans had to be trained to become agitators, propagandists and organizers of the National-liberation War and set a good personal example of the highest moral and political qualities wherever they

came to and in their relations with the masses of peasants whom they should mobilize and organize for the National-liberation War and for participation in the ranks of the Army of partisans and volunteers.

Thanks to their genuine ethical conduct, their spirit of discipline, self-abnegation and hard work they won the sympathy and confidence of the broad masses of people. Through their fight, manner of living and hard work the partisans imparted to the people the spirit of self-reliance and convinced them of the justice of the war and of their ultimate victory. Through their determined struggle and earnest behavior the people came to consider the partisans as their liberators, as the champions of their interests.

Urban and rural workers saw and became convinced that partisan and volunteer fighters spared nothing, not even their lives in their fight to vanquish the invaders and traitors. Wherever the partisans came to they won the sympathy of the masses and were heartily welcomed by them.

But this was not all the partisans looked for. They wanted and succeeded in creating a powerful political support among the people. Having been brought up in the spirit of resenting to the point of death the invaders and all the enemies of the liberation movement, they imparted this spirit to the broad masses of people too. The deeper the resentment of the fighters towards the enemy, the deeper was their devotion towards their own people and this was so because the liberation war was a struggle for life or death, deepening hatred towards the enemy and enhancing devotion towards the people, like two things incumbent on each other.

Partisans became conscientious fighters because they were politically elucidated through meetings and conferences of bands or battalions. At these meetings they

heard speeches about the National-liberation War, about the history of Albania, about fascism and the war waged against it, about the political and military situation in the world and at home, about the role of youth in the national-liberation struggle, about the role of women in this struggle on the importance and necessity of joining the sound forces of the people on the basis of the alliance of workers and peasants, on ethics, discipline, social relations among fighters, correct relations between partisans and the people and so on.

Far from violating the honor and property of the people the partisans were, on the contrary, the champions and best protectors of the honor and wealth of the people. They did not lay their hands on foodstuffs and other things belonging to the population living in regions they passed through. They preserved the customs and the historically established traditions of the people. Acts of immorality were condemned to death by public execution as unworthy of any member of the National-liberation Army.

Fighters organized performances of plays, sketches, sang revolutionary songs and so on in villages and towns. All of these rendered direct service to the aims of the war against the enemy. The invaders and their lackeys were exposed and made light of in these plays and sketches.

Where feasible the partisans organized courses of study to teach the 3R's especially to the illiterate peasants. The partisans strove hard and persistently to bring home to the people the evil of blood feuds, the evil of stealing and of all other backward habits.

It was only thus that the partisans won the sympathy of the people, their support and gradual participation in the National-liberation War, joining the partisan ranks of their own free will. Thanks to work of this



A group of young partisans of both sexes reading the field newspaper «The Struggle of Youth»



kind peasants and workers were trained and inured to bear any hardships in the war against invaders and traitors. Thus, the popular masses who had been misled and intimidated began to gradually understand why the war was necessary and joined the colors. It was through this work and contact with the masses that the sound unity of the people in the war against the enemy was achieved. Opportunities were grasped and methods were adopted to send our fighters out to the countryside to explain the need and aim of our war and mobilize new fighters to swell the ranks of partisans.

Faced with the need of establishing the base for partisan formations, negotiations were conducted, at the first phase of the war, with various individuals or groups of runaways for various offenses as murder, blood feuds, or matters affecting their honor. Many of them were convinced of the justice of the National-liberation War and were admitted into the ranks of partisans. Those involved in heavy crimes or ordinary criminals like thieves and burglars were not admitted to the colors.

Of major importance in the activities of partisans was also their military training. Special individuals were assigned to give instructions on the use of weapons. Every fighter had to master the technique of using the various weapons at their disposal or weapons that had been captured from the enemy, such as automatic rifles, carbines, automatic pistols, mortars and other kinds of firearms.

Special heed was devoted to the teaching of the partisan technique of warfare, of choosing the most appropriate position to attack the enemy and to withdraw from when the need arose.

Special attention was attached also to reconnaissance, although there have been many cases of neglect in this

line. The partisans were trained how to fight by night, in the woods and, eventually, how to capture inhabited centers. Our partisan forces, groups of or individual fighters learned their lesson mostly by the vicissitudes of war and in many cases by bitter experience to take the necessary steps of security by sentinels. Fighters were also trained to size up military situations, especially on the aims and tactics of military operations of the enemy.

Much was done to keep the morale of partisans high. The educational work referred to above did a lot to achieve this end. The war showed that endowed with a high sense of duty the partisans carried out the tasks assigned to them and treated their successes and temporary losses with the same *sang froid*, though cases have been on record when low spirits have brought with them exasperation and dissension with random cases of desertion, confusion, panic and demoralization especially when the enemy has attacked partisan formations in many directions. Such cases occurred during the Winter Campaign of the enemy (November 1943 to February 1944).

Manifestations of immorality among the partisans were severely punished. An end was put to robbery, plunder etc. Cases are on record when death sentences were passed on individuals who had committed stealth or rape. This was of special importance for it was precisely on these grounds that the invaders and traitors tried to stain our good name. They even sent out bandits in partisan uniform to plunder the population and discredit the partisans.

A major role in winding up the partisan war with success was played by the spirit of initiative in carrying out instructions and orders in a creative way. This quality was developed not only among leaders but also among

the rank and file of partisans. On their own initiative they lost no opportunity to deal blows to the enemy whenever and wherever the occasion arose for military operations against them. Commands of partisan formations developed the spirit of initiative also because it often happened that orders did not arrive in time because of unforeseen obstacles. Those partisan forces which waited for orders for action were often left in the lurch. By failing to use their own initiative they neglected a strong arm in the war against the enemy. A deficiency of this kind has prevented the partisan formations from turning to a live force to carry out their basic obligations.

The General Staff allowed full initiative to the partisan forces to hit the enemy wherever and as heavily as possible. Partisan forces were successful in their work because they were continually engaged in political and military activities. They did not stay long in one place drawing provisions from peasants, for that would harm the National-liberation War.

*Sang froid*, determination, self-abnegation, perseverance and attentiveness, were the qualities which were imparted to the fighters and especially to the leaders of partisan and volunteer detachments. They inspired and educated comrades and the broad masses of people by their own example to carry the war to the end and spare not even their own lives to achieve the ultimate objective. The imperturbability and determination of partisans have been a powerful weapon in all circumstances, particularly, at critical moments. There have been cases when lack of self-control has led to immature and unreasonable decisions. Lack of self-command and desperation have often bedazzled fighters and leaders and prevented them from sizing up the situation correctly and taking the right decision.



Relations between fighters and those in charge were sound, hearty, frank and truly sociable. Real affection and fellow feeling existed among them. They did not play false with one another. Intrigues, disrespect, foul invectives and insults were alien manifestations for them. When not engaged in military actions or chores the fighters used their spare time cleansing their weapons, washing and mending their clothes, reading books and so on. For their own political and cultural uplift they indulged in profitable discussions, organized groups of singers, engaged in games and various forms of amusement offending no one.

Relations between those in charge and the fighters were cordial and correct and so were relations between male and female partisans. Women partisans were usually assigned to jobs caring for the sick but this did not exclude the possibility of assigning them to do military duty like their male mates.

Food, clothing and lodging were alike for all, officers and privates, and they were supplied by the population. Special heed was devoted to finding lodgings for all wherever this was possible. All inclinations to secure better food and better lodgings for some and to leave others without were strongly combatted. The sick and wearied were provided with better food, warmer clothing and better lodging whenever this was possible.

When food was cooked in a common caldron the meals were taken collectively. Officers and privates were fed out of the same boiler. When partisan forces grew in numbers, staff members in certain cases cooked their food in separate pots but having always the same rations as others.

Partisan forces held regular meetings not only to hear lectures but also to discuss about their work. At these meetings both fighters and their superiors

enjoyed equal rights. They made criticism and self-criticism on the work and conduct of fighters and officers in the war. The criticism was of a constructive nature, unbiased and with good intentions. Errors and shortcomings were pointed out with a view to correcting and eliminating them. The most experienced, most conscientious and most responsible comrades saw to it that sound, comradely relations prevailed among the ranks.

Food for partisan and volunteer forces was provided mainly by voluntary contributions of the population. It was also bought in the market and amassed from the sequestration and confiscation of the property of the traitors to the people. The booty captured from the enemy was stored away in secure bases. Whatever war material captured, arms, foodstuffs and clothes, was turned over to the command which distributed it regularly to those who needed it.

Whatever foodstuffs and clothing captured from the enemy and which the partisans could not take away with them, was turned over and distributed to the population. No looting was tolerated and whatever was captured was considered war booty and the command was informed of it.

During sequestration, a receipt was drawn up for things sequestered, the name of the person from whom they were sequestered, the purpose for which they were sequestered, the price and the name of the person authorized to sequester them. Payment was made on presentation of these receipts by the command concerned when funds were available. Sequestration was made on a voluntary basis but when the partisans were extremely short of supplies the sequestration was also made by force, taking the necessary commodities mainly from such persons

as refused to sell them on credit. Misuse of sequestered goods was severely punished. No sequestration was resorted to, not even on a voluntary basis, if other methods of securing provisions were available.

As to confiscation, it was applied to the traitors to the people and without pay or obligations of any kind. In such cases, the families were allowed to keep the necessary amount to subsist on, for this measure had no intention of doing harm to the other members of the family. The members of the families of traitors were treated with decency. The army kept that part of confiscated goods it needed and turned the surplus over to the National-liberation Councils to distribute among the poor or to exchange for things the army stood in need of. This was done in agreement with National-liberation Councils, and in their absence, with respectable people of the village or of the inhabited center.

Stewardships were set up to look after provisions, supervise and distribute them. Partisan formations ranging from bands and battalions to higher ones set up health centers (infirmaries) where wounded partisans received first aid, had their wounds bandaged, were removed from the battlefield and were taken to partisan bases and so on. In most cases doctors were not available and this job was assigned to women partisans who had only elementary knowledge of giving first aid. Sanitary material was eventually secured through war booty or through voluntary contributions of the population. When the fighting front grew in size, hospitals were set up in liberated areas to treat the wounded and the sick. Hospitals had their own directors, physicians and political commissars.

Partisan commands organized also their service of information, to accumulate data on the aims and movements of the enemy, on the belligerent attitude of the

agents of the fifth column and of the other splitters of the people's war. But a similar service of information, perhaps in simpler forms and less frequent contacts, was also set up among the ranks of the enemy. Comrades more proficient in this kind of work were assigned to the job of informant. The informational service was supervised by the deputy political commissar. A good service was rendered in this respect by local elements who served in the gendarmery, police force, militia and army of the enemy but who had gradually come to understand the treason of those persons who had placed themselves conscientiously in the service of the enemy. To achieve this a great deal of persuasive work was done and skillful use was made of the blood relations, friendships, customs, positive traditions which the partisans and persons of the movement maintained with elements who had entered the service of the enemy for aught they knew. In such cases careful work was done to frustrate the provocations resorted to by the enemy to counteract and neutralize or do away with this form of work.

When partisan ranks grew in size and numbers Courts-martials were set up to judge offenses and pronounce sentences. These courts-martials were made up of the deputy political commissar, deputy-commander and a prominent, conscientious fighter as a member. The member was not a permanent one, he could be replaced as the need might arise. In the absence of the deputy-commissar and deputy-commander, the political commissar and commander took their places at the bench. The deputy-commissar presided at the hearing. The court appointed its secretary. Courts-martials were set up in battalions.

Courts-martials passed judgments on: crimes, treason, spying for the enemy, sabotage, desertion, immorality,



stealth, murder and on any belligerent activity against the National-liberation Movement.

Punishments meted out by the courts ranged from expulsion from the ranks of the National-liberation Army, depriving the guilty of the partisan badge, depriving him of the rifle for a definite period of time, refusing permission to move away, reprobation and reproof to death sentences. Verdicts were communicated in the presence of the partisan formation as a whole explaining also the reasons for such verdicts. Sentences passed by courts-martials were put into execution immediately. Punishments could be suspended if the guilty ones gave hope for improvement. In such cases, they could also be re-admitted into the ranks of partisans, whereas death sentences were put into execution at once.

\* \* \*

Things that should be said about the outcome of the triumph of the national-liberation struggle of the Albanian people against invaders and traitors: In the first place, it is attributable to the clear-cut and firm marxist-leninist line of the Albanian Communist Party, which did not only rescue our people but assured a life worth living to them. The upshot of this firm stand was not only the liberation of the country from the invaders and traitors but also the fact that power was totally and permanently turned over to the laborers making it possible for the working masses to proceed towards building their own new life.

During the war for national-liberation our people became inured and won great historical experience, an experience which, judged by its magnitude, sets an example that corroborates the correctness of marxist-leninist teachings and revolutionary wars for all peoples.

This experience repudiates at the same time the preachings of the enemies of the National-liberation Movement, who advance all kinds of false recipes on the ways of liberating the people from the heel of imperialism and colonialism.

The experience of the National-liberation War of our people points out that freedom is not donated, that one should not expect to have it dealt out as a boon by the imperialist enemy who resent the people and furiously oppose their freedom and independence in order to hold them under bondage. Therefore, one should in no ways lend credit to their demagogy and fine pledges. National-liberation and social emancipation is the job of the people of every country, of the broad masses of workers themselves and can be attained through battle and firm exertion.

The experience of the national-liberation War of our people points out that in order to win this battle and consolidate the successes attained it is essential to set up a political army which would include all patriotic, democratic and revolutionary forces determined to fight. This unification among us was successfully realized within the framework of the National-liberation Front.

Furthermore, the experience of our National-liberation War has shown at the same time that it is necessary to set up a powerful, revolutionary people's army, faithful to the last towards the vital interests of the people and of the country, capable of liberating the country and protecting it from any attacks by imperialists and reactionary forces.

Another necessary condition to achieve success is to break down the whole social system of exploitation and to set up a new, an entirely new, system of government emanating from, bound to and supervised by the

people themselves. This was realized among us through the National-liberation Councils. The experience of our war repudiates also the preachings of the enemies of the people, the imperialists and their collaborators, who claim that power can be turned over to the people also without overthrowing the bourgeois state apparatus. The stand of the imperialists and their collaborators is hostile from top to bottom.

Finally it must be said that in order to achieve victory it is necessary to have a sound revolutionary leadership made up of persons from the ranks of the people who are capable of guiding and abiding faithfully by them to the end regardless of sacrifice.

#### **CONSTANT CONCERN OF THE PARTY TO STRENGTHEN THE DEFENSIVE CAPACITY AND ASSURE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE COUNTRY**

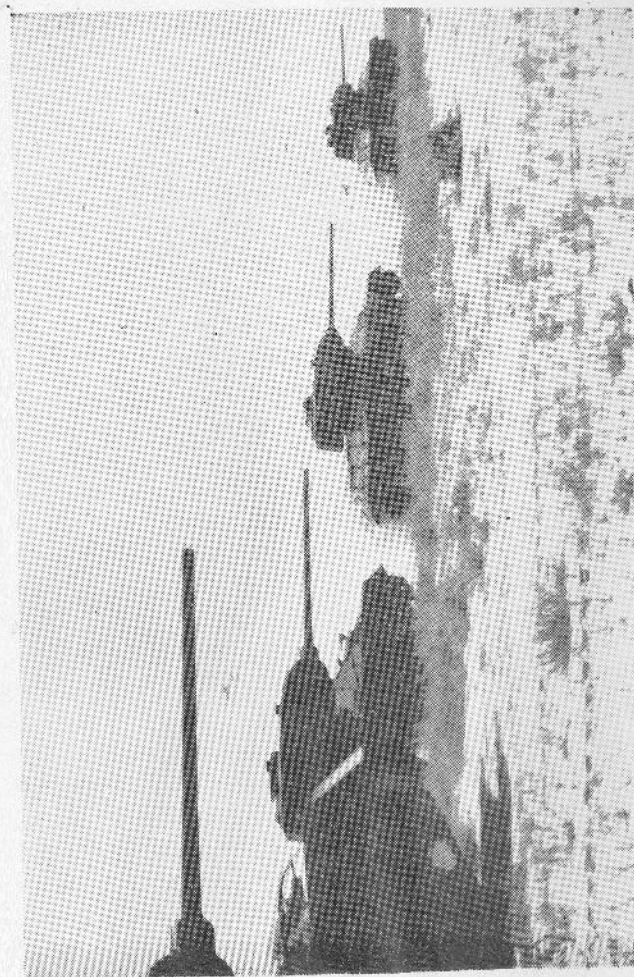
Our People's Army sprang up in the heat of battle of our National-liberation War under the critical condition of fascist occupation, at a time when the very existence of our people as a nation was at stake. Under a situation of this kind our Party gave the signal for a general armed uprising and organization of the striking force of the people against the enemy. Our liberation army, emerging from the rank and file and kneaded with the glorious ideas of marxism-leninism, would know how to fight with heroism for the liberation of the country and for the rights of workers. The tasks facing our army at this stage were harsh, demanding great sacrifice in the name of the country and of the interests of the workers. But under the inspiration and direct wise guidance of the Party, our Army discharged with honor its historic mission — that of liberating the country — and then placed itself on guard to the peaceful work, on guard to the historic achievements of the workers.

After liberation a range of new tasks emerged. Our Party, as a marxist-leninist one, could not confine itself to merely bringing about freedom to our people. It had taken upon itself the obligation of assuring all rights to the workers, of bringing about deep revolutionary transformations, of establishing social justice. The Party took the appropriate steps to make good these pledges. It set to work to heal the wounds of war and re-build the country devastated by the war, it carried out land reform and turned the land over to the peasants, it disowned capitalists, proprietors of large estates in cities and on the countryside and set up, in this way, the



socialist sector in economy. Of course, all these transformations could not be effected without meeting with the resistance of the enemies of the class and of the international bourgeoisie, which became aware of the fact that these steps would lead to the socialist development of our country. Therefore, under these conditions, our Party deemed it a historical necessity to strengthen our defensive capacity, our army. The revolutionary tasks that were being carried out at this period demanded, of course, that a firm fight should be waged to frustrate the attempts of internal enemy elements and imperialists and their lackeys. Consequently, the Party took steps and consolidated, first of all, the People's Regime by cleansing the state apparatus of representatives of the bourgeoisie both at the top and at the base. Persons loyal to the revolution and determined to fight to the last to defend its achievements were placed at the head of the state. This constituted one of the revolutionary steps that led to important progress in all directions of the economic and political life and in reviving the defensive power of the country, by further strengthening our army as an essential medium to crush the resistance of the enemy and of the remnants of fascism as well as to render harmless the diabolic activity of imperialism towards us. Our Party rejected with contempt the alien and dangerous views of bourgeois elements who, claiming that they had «the good» of the country at heart, launched the slogan that it was no longer necessary to maintain a strong army during the post-war period as it would cost a great lot to the people. This in fact meant that our People's Republic be disarmed, be left unprotected against the imperialist wolves which whetted their teeth to bite it off in pieces.

Thus, while showing great concern and devoting continued attention to economic problems with a view



Tanks while drilling

to improving the life of the people, our Party showed an equally deep concern about training and strengthening our army so as to turn it into a modern army, highly organized of a new military technique and strong discipline, capable of protecting the achievements of the workers and of opposing and shattering all hostile attempts from wherever they came.

It was under the direct concern of the Party that our army was brought up to date, that it adopted the last word in military, especially Stalinite, technical art, that it was trained in the spirit of the glorious traditions of the National-liberation Army, of the traditions of our heroic people, of internationalism and love for peoples, in the spirit of brotherhood and military comradeship, which turned our army into a really first class army.

Under the guidance of our Party, our army has always headed towards perfection and increase of its military power. It has never lacked the means to develop normally along military and political lines to keep up with the exigencies of the times. It has undergone changes in the forms of organization. Whereas before it was merely a territorial force, it has now become an armed force of different modern armaments and services including air, naval and territorial forces. Our army is equipped with a powerful artillery, tanks and other weapons.

Great changes have also come about in the territorial forces. Their striking power has increased, their detachments and sub-detachments have become more mobile as a result of their mechanization and motorization. All of these have raised the military preparedness, the maneuvering and striking power of land detachments higher.

Bearing in mind the development of aviation, the role it plays in modern warfare, and the danger air strikes have for our country, our Party has always devoted special attention to strengthening the anti-air craft



defenses of the state. Thus, our new jet fighters have been brought in, our anti-air craft artillery and our radar installations have been highly equipped and well organized, and so on.

In compliance with the specific conditions of our country, our Party and Government have attached special importance to the development of our military naval fleet. It has been equipped with first class means and technique and, together with the other kinds of armaments, it is capable of smashing all eventual assaults of the enemy, defending the sea boundaries of our homeland with honor.

«But the real power of our army does not lie in armaments and military technique alone, it lies, first and foremost, in the fact that this technique is in the sure hands of our patriotic, loyal, capable and conscientious fighters who are ready to lay down their lives in defense of our homeland, in defense of our cause — socialism and communism» (Excerpt from a speech delivered by the Minister of People's Defense, Colonel-General Beqir Balluku, at the IVth Congress of the Party).

Our Party and our People's Government have done and continue to do good work in training in military schools and courses as well as in the network of military, ideological and political institutions, efficient cadres for our People's Army, capable of drilling and educating their dependents according to the requirements of modern military art. Our cadres, emerging from the heat of battle of our National-liberation War and from the work of building socialism, are characterized by their party spirit in service, by their high sense of socialist duty; our cadres are persons of devotion and high virtues, loyal to the end to the Party and to the vital interests of the workers, peasants and laboring masses whose offspring they are.



Equipped with most up-to-date technique our army keeps watch and ward over the achievements of the People's Republic of Albania

Our Party has likewise done and is doing good and allround work to raise the ideologic and cultural standard of our troops. Our army has become a really big school for the sons of workers and laboring masses who are educated in the spirit of the revolutionary traditions of our people and of our army, in the spirit of unbounded love and loyalty to the people and to the Party, in the spirit of the great ideas of marxism-leninism; they are tempered and inured to be champions and worthy builders of socialist society.

Our Party leadership has been and is the source of the successes of our People's Army. The principled marxist-leninist line of our Party has been taken to heart by all our military men for it is based on the interests of the workers. It is for this reason that all our soldiers are tightening their ranks ever so closer round our heroic Party which is making the life of our people cheerful, beautiful and prosperous. The army is an integral part of the people, their offspring, emerging from their ranks. As a vigilant guardian of the country, it has succeeded in dealing blows to all enemies, who, in various phases of international and internal situations, have striven to create confusion and endanger however little the peaceful and constructive work of our people.

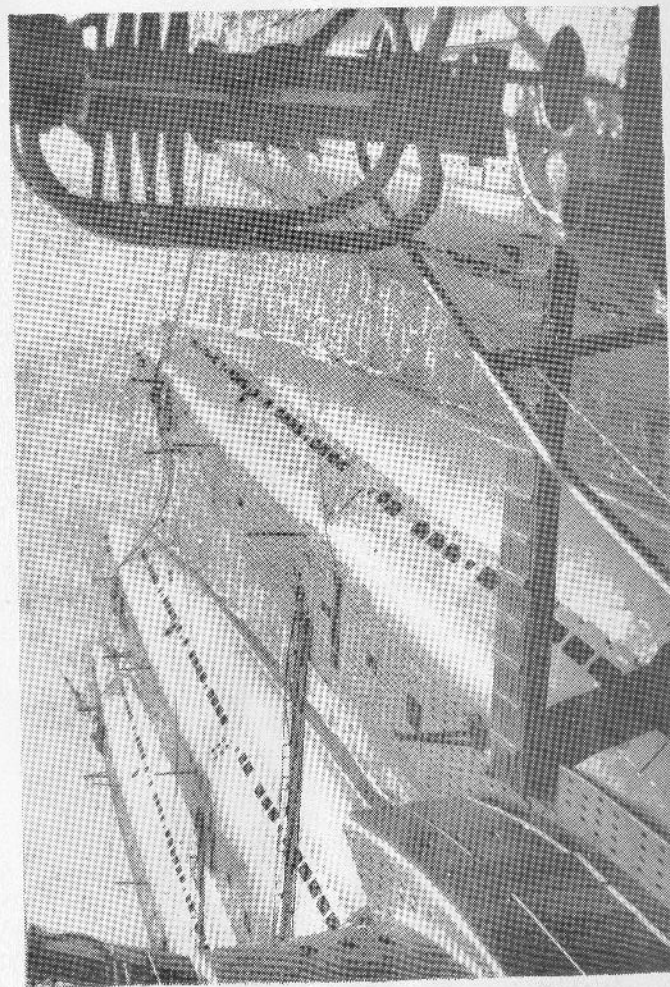
Our army gave further proof of their unity and compactness round the Party and Comrade Enver Hoxha, by fully approving the directives of the IVth Congress of the Party of Labor of Albania as well as by the continuous self-abnegating work it does in strengthening its military preparedness. The moral and political unity of the working masses and of the army round our Party, their unity of thought and action in carrying out the general line of the Party, have been and will always be the decisive factor in defending independence and in building socialism.

Submarines on the alert in defense of the People's Republic of Albania



The allround successes in the work of socialist construction, the continuous consolidation of the people's economy, the rise of cultural standards and the constant political and ideological uplift of our people are closely linked with the further strengthening of the defensive capacity of the country. With these important factors in view, our Party and Government have done and continue to do a great deal to speed up the rate of development of the people's economy, to strengthen and democratize further the People's Rule in all its ramifications; to make the ties with the masses more sound; to deepen more and more the cultural revolution; to intensify the ideological and political work with the people. By skillfully guiding the work of building socialism, the Party has successfully mobilized the masses. Repeated successes have thus been scored in every phase of life and, consequently, the economic basis of socialism has been laid both in the urban and rural regions. This has enabled our country to leap over into another stage, into the stage of complete socialist construction.

Now the socialist sector in industry includes nearly one hundred percent of the production, which, in contrast with 1938 has been increased manifold. Our heavy industry, transportation and other branches of our people's economy have developed and are continually developing at a rapid rate. Collectivization of agriculture effected in the countryside has given rise to a new and better system opening the way to further development of the productive forces in agriculture. Important successes have been achieved in the cultural and ideological revolution through the spread of a broad network of schools all over the country and through a continuous political and educational activity in various forms of work and by a number of appropriate institutions like cultural homes



Submarines on the alert in defense of the territorial waters of the People's Republic of Albania

and hearths, moving-pictures, theaters, libraries, reading halls and son on.

These successes are of major significance because they do not only serve the welfare of the people, which is the highest aim of the Party, but also because in the various sectors of economy and culture we train specialists capable of discharging honorably their sacred duty in defending the homeland and in handling and directing with success the use of military technique. Those who are enlisted nowadays in the army are better prepared, endowed with the virtues of communist ethics, with the habits of working, with a higher ideological and cultural standing, all gained while working. Thus, the allround consolidation of the people's economy exerts a direct influence in strengthening the defensive capacity of the country, both of these problems being closely and inseparably bound with each other.

Life and development of events during the post-liberation period when victories of major historic significance were scored in building socialism and in smashing the attempts of the enemy to undermine our People's Republic, confirm in a most brilliant way the correctness of the line and the wisdom of our Party which has always expressed in all matters the interests of the workers. The Party has skilfully guided and directed the work in all fields, bettering the life of our people and strengthening the defensive capacity of our homeland.

Sizing up the events in the international situation and in our country objectively, our Party and the Government of our Republic have drawn a number of conclusions and have set a number of concrete tasks in order to further strengthen the defensive power of the country.

Imperialism, particularly American imperialism, is and remains a serious obstacle to peace. Its savage,



aggressive nature has not changed also because as long as the capitalist system exists there exists also the economic and social basis for wars. At present the imperialists have greatly increased their aggressive activity. In many parts of the world like Viet Nam, the Congo, Laos, Cuba and elsewhere one can detect the gory hands of imperialist monopoly and especially of the Washington magnates, who have raised diversion, blackmail, hostile activity of agents into the height of state policies. The hypocritical statements for peace made by the heads of imperialism, with those of the United States of America in the lead, are only fine words to lead the people astray. Facts bespeak the contrary. Imperialist Powers keep increasing their military budgets, increase their armament race in an unbridled way. Militarism and fascism have been revived in West Germany and Hitler's successors have assumed power there. The diabolic schemes of the imperialists jeopardize peace. Western Powers are opposed to all constructive proposals of the socialist countries for talks on various international issues. This act becomes even more perilous if account is taken of the great activity of modern revisionists who, far from keeping up their struggle to unmask the aggressive plans of imperialism, cover up with fine phrases the grave danger threatening peoples through the aggressive course pursued by the imperialist politicians. Revisionists strive to slacken the vigilance of peoples and appease and quell the class struggle in the international arena, they strive to lead the workers astray and lull them to sleep so as not to rise against the imperialist warmongers.

Under such circumstances one can clearly see why our Party cannot fail to draw the necessary conclusions and strengthen the defensive power and raise the revolutionary vigilance of the people, especially as we build

socialism under conditions of capitalist and revisionist geographic encirclement and when we continually experience and feel how cruel, how savage and how aggressive imperialism is and how perfidious and what plotters their lackeys, the revisionists, are.

Side by side with the improvement and perfection of the economic, organizational and cultural functions of our state, our Party has deemed it urgent to strengthen and perfect the function of protecting the achievements attained so as to frustrate every attempt of the internal and especially of the external enemies to undermine our People's Republic. «Our Party», Comrade Enver said, «should continue in the days to come too to show more concern about strengthening the organs of the dictatorship. We should further strengthen our armed forces, our valiant army, to modernize and perfect all the kinds of armaments.» These biddings of our beloved leader are a program of work for our army; every man in the army draws from them the appropriate conclusions to work harder and better, to master and perfect the military profession.

Stressing the need of raising the capacity and the defensive power of our country, our Party has taught and teaches our people to build socialism holding the pick in one hand and the rifle in the other. This militant slogan has sprung up as an objective necessity of the actual circumstances under which our people live and work. Old and young persons in our country have adopted this mobilizing and inspiring slogan which points out that in building socialism, in addition to speedily building our economy, we should keep the powder dry and maintain a high degree of revolutionary preparedness and vigilance.

Numerous examples go to prove that our working class, our laboring peasants, our popular intelligentsia and our armed forces, responding to the call of the Party, have been and are prepared to heroically defend our

People's Rule, our major historic achievements in building socialism. All are united as one body to carry out the biddings of the Party and to forge always ahead along the glorious road to socialism scoring repeated success and raising the reputation of our homeland, strengthening both the economy and the defensive capacity of our homeland.

Our Party and Government have highly assessed the major role played by our Armed Forces as a praiseworthy shield and warranty in defending the peaceful work of our people.

In the Resolution of the IVth Congress of the Party we read: «Our valorous army, our untiring organs of security and police, and the vigilant guards of our borders have been strengthened under the guidance of our Party and have been modernized and have always honorably discharged the duties assigned to them. They are fully competent to protect the People's Republic of Albania, all the achievements of our people. The Party should continue to intensify its work of strengthening the organs of dictatorship, of strengthening and modernizing our Armed Forces, of heightening the vigilance and professional proficiency of the organs of public security, of the police and frontier guards as well as of strengthening the relations of these organs with the people.

The successful solution of the tasks of building socialism as well as the intensified struggle against bourgeois ideology and against modern revisionism, demand a further consolidation of the ideological work of the Party, raising it to a higher level.»

This high appraisal and these tasks assigned by the Congress have highly inspired the ranks of our Armed Forces, have mobilized our military men for work to make our army still stronger in the hands of workers to defend their interests and their achievements. Every



Vigilant guardians of the Republic's air space.



man in the army is well aware that under the actual circumstances when the aggressive forces of imperialism and the undermining and splitting acts of their servants, the modern revisionists, are assuming growing proportions, it is each one's duty to achieve higher results in their combative and political training. Every one is striving to learn the military profession, to master and make better use of armaments and technique, to be kneaded and tempered under the immortal teachings of marxism-leninism, to become worthier defenders of the homeland, capable of getting an insight into the machinations and intrigues of the enemy and of frustrating their plots.

The abnegating work of the army, the tireless efforts of soldiers and officers to strengthen the defensive power of the country have given rise to the legitimate pride of the people who can work in peace and security with their backs well protected. Today, more than ever, people and army have become one and inseparable. Workers respond with enthusiasm to the call of the organs of mobilization for various military drills and make no secret of their readiness to take up arms and fight side by side with the army in defense of our homeland. This is an expression of the high patriotism of the working masses, of their determination to put into practice the biddings and decisions of the Party and of the Government.

Our people have put all their efforts to fulfilling the 3d five-year plan of the state. Our army, inspired by the abnegating efforts of the laboring masses to continually raise the people's economy, have set to work with multiplied forces to raise their military preparedness to the highest degree.

Every soldier, by giving the maximum of what he can give, carries out the requirements, orders and instruc-

tions of the Minister of Defense to master the program of military and political training, convinced that in this way he carries out the line of the Party. The military strive to act exactly as in real warfare when they take part in military drill and service, making no concessions or simplifications.

The successful fulfilment of military tasks is closely bound to strict and conscientious discipline, for every one strives to carry out to the letter and in due time the demands of his military vow, to abide by military rules and regulations, to comply with the various orders and instructions of his superiors. They are convinced that without strict discipline no war can be won, that in peacetime no training is possible to act with consummate skill in war.

Accomplishing their tasks in a revolutionary spirit the military men carry out with strictness the rules of service wherever they may be, at the sentinel's post or in the park, at the barracks or on the drilling grounds; they rigidly keep the military and state secret and strike at any manifestation of various elements who disobey the rules.

The fighters of our People's Army put all their efforts to raising their ideological, political and cultural standards and to appropriating the best traditions of our brave partisans who won great distinction during the National-liberation War for their heroism, valor, determination to carry out all the instructions of the Party, for their modesty, their fellow feeling for and aid to one another and their readiness to subordinate their personal interests to the general interests.

The fighters of our People's Army exert all their efforts to get acquainted with, guard and wield with ability the arms and technique in use.

Thanks to these efforts the fighting power of our army is becoming stronger and stronger from day to

day. Our people are proud that they possess a well organized modern army, equipped with everything necessary to defend the freedom and independence of the homeland and deal death blows to the enemy who might dare to raise their hand against the People's Republic of Albania.

This task has been fully and successfully accomplished, for, through their heroic stand, our people and our army have won the sympathy and support of all the revolutionary forces of the world who fight with determination and irresistible vigor against the imperialists and their lackeys.

The importance of the support and internationalist aid of the revolutionary and peace-loving forces of the world is clearly expressed in Comrade Enver Hoxha's speech delivered on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the liberation of the country:

«Numerous comrades and friends from all over the world, fellow fighters for the great cause of peace, freedom, democracy and socialism, take part wholeheartedly in this great jubilation of our people. Allow me to express to all true friends of new Albania, in your name, in the name of our people and of our Party, our deep and unbounded gratitude for their sincere sympathy, fraternal support and solidarity towards our people and our Party of Labor. Their friendship and solidarity have been, are and will always be dear to us, since they are significant factors and part and parcel of all the achievements of our people, they constitute a great encouragement for us to continue with ever greater determination our just struggle for the further prosperity of new Albania, for complete edification of socialism, for the triumph of the noble cause of marxism-leninism».

The words voiced by Comrade Enver, the loyal son and leader of our people, are eloquent for they express their vital interests, their past, their present and their future.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                                                       | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| — Introduction .....                                                                                                                                  | 3    |
| — Economic and social standing of the country during the period of Zog's rule .....                                                                   | 6    |
| — Resistance of the Albanian people against the oppressive measures of the Italian fascist invaders .....                                             | 8    |
| — Resistance of the Albanian people during the early years of fascist invasion .....                                                                  | 12   |
| — Our first efforts to embark on an armed uprising .....                                                                                              | 15   |
| — The work of setting up guerrilla units .....                                                                                                        | 21   |
| — Formation of partisan bands, battalions and groups .....                                                                                            | 24   |
| — Formation of the general staff and its role — the setting up of larger detachments and crossing over to the phase of a general armed uprising ..... | 38   |
| — Solving the problem of cadres .....                                                                                                                 | 46   |
| — Some principles of the tactics of partisan warfare .....                                                                                            | 48   |
| — The problem of supplies and armaments .....                                                                                                         | 52   |
| — The 1943-44 winter campaign of the enemy and the exploits of our national-liberation army .....                                                     | 67   |
| — Operations of the national-liberation army during the second campaign undertaken by the German nazis and local traitors (May-July, 1944) .....      | 76   |
| — Liberation of the country and establishment of people's power — factors that determined attainment of these major achievements .....                | 83   |
| — Military exploits of our divisions beyond the borders of our homeland .....                                                                         | 95   |
| — General considerations borne in mind when organizing the national-liberation army .....                                                             | 100  |
| — Constant concern of the Party to strengthen the defensive capacity and assure the independence of our country ....                                  | 115  |